

FAÇADE OF THE CATHEDRAL OF ZACATECAS

214

✓ HISTORIC
CHURCHES
IN MEXICO

WITH SOME OF THEIR
LEGENDS

BY
MRS. JOHN WESLEY BUTLER ✓
" "



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TO MY HUSBAND

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FOREWORD

MY purpose is to write, not of the churches of Mexico, nor even of the larger churches, but, as the title indicates, of the historic churches; that is to say, the churches which have gathered about themselves a certain history, and, particularly, a certain amount of legend and folklore. To the Mexican, and doubtless also to the general public, the chief interest in these sacred edifices is due not to the date of founding or the details of architectural design and construction so much as to the legends of the titular saint, the richness of the altar, the images and paintings with the stories peculiar to them. Most of the Mexican churches owe their importance and, in some cases, their existence to some special image, mysterious painting, or miraculous cross.

These churches were designed by Spanish architects or by Mexicans who had learned their art from Spaniards. The workmen, excepting those employed for the more elaborate

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

and delicate parts, were Indians, whose labor, though arduous and in some cases enforced, was on the whole a labor of love. Some of the churches, together with certain convents and monasteries, were erected at the expense of wealthy men, either in the lifetime of the donors or from legacies. The number of churches, taking the country over, at one period was almost beyond belief. Not infrequently the impression in visiting a town was that the space covered by churches exceeded that given over to the dwellings of the people. Indeed, more money was invested in religious edifices and other church property than in the homes of the people. There were at one time in Mexico City three hundred churches of solid stone masonry, equivalent to one church for every eight hundred inhabitants.

The decorations and the variety and extent of the ornaments in the older churches before their sequestration by the Mexican government, in the year 1859, were bewildering. Cortez and his successors, in order to impress and hold the natives, encouraged an elaborate and spectacular service and made much of interior decoration. There were many statues of Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Paintings of great value adorned the walls. The altars were burdened with their gold and silver ornaments and rare jewels. Many of the churches have pillars and altars of the famous Mexican onyx, which appears to be growing more beautiful with the passing years.

During the thirty-six years of my residence in Mexico, as I have from time to time wandered through the Mexican churches, some of which I have endeavored to describe in this book, I have found myself offering the prayer that the historic church of Mexico would be led to return to the simplicity and fervor of primitive times and, in cooperation with the evangelical churches of that country, whose purpose is not rivalry or worldly ambition, but the establishing of the kingdom of our common Lord, give to the hungry millions of Mexico the bread of life. This, it is perhaps needless to say, is Mexico's, as it is the world's chief need.

S. A. B.

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH OF TLAXCALA
THE CHURCHES OF CHOLULA
THE CHURCH OF NAUCALPAN,
WITH THE VIRGIN OF
REMEDIOS

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH OF TLAXCALA

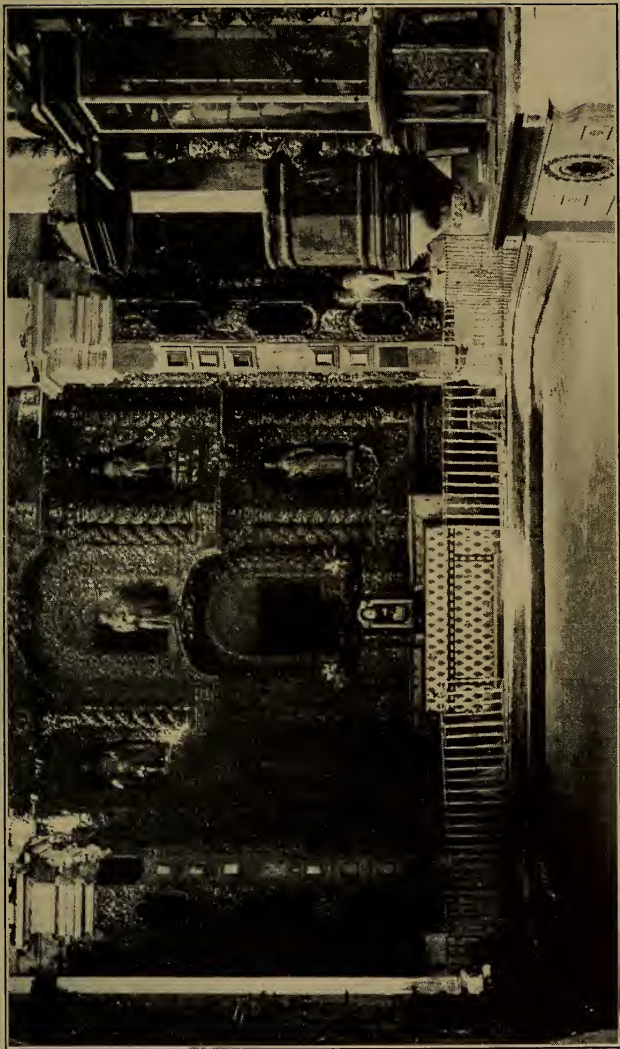
AFTER burning his ships in the port of Vera Cruz in order to prevent his little army of eight hundred and eighty-one men from plotting to return to Spain, Cortez began his march to the Aztec capital (known as Tenochtitlan) August 16, 1519. The king of the Totonacs, through whose country he was obliged to pass on his way to the capital, received him kindly and furnished him with provisions and guides. The tribe pledged him allegiance in the hope that through him they would recover their freedom from Aztec rule.

Cortez and his followers continued their journey westward under favorable conditions until they reached the territory of the independent Tlaxcalans, who had refused to pay tribute to Moctezuma II, then ruler of the Aztecs. The Spaniards were received with open arms by the Tlaxcalans, because they thought they saw in Cortez the features of

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

their god Quetzalcoatl, who, according to the popular belief, was the son of a virgin mother of fair skin, wore a long white beard and was clothed in flowing garments of white, embroidered with a red cross. It is worthy of note that in this very year of the landing of the Spaniards on Mexican soil, Quetzalcoatl was expected to return to the country. The Tlaxcalans were soon undeceived. After four terrible battles with the Spaniards they were obliged to acknowledge defeat. Four years later (in 1523) a church was built by the Spaniards to commemorate the conversion and baptism of the four Tlaxcalan senators in whom had been vested the supreme power of the country.

Over the great stone font in this church there is the following inscription: "In this font the four senators of the Ancient Republic of Tlaxcala received the Catholic faith. The religious act took place in the year 1520, the Priest being Don Loan Diaz, chaplain of the conquering army, and the godfathers Captain Cortez and his distinguished officers." At the right of the font is the first pulpit used in America. The ceiling of the church is of cedar and is of fine workmanship. The beams



TLAXCALA, FIRST PULPIT IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

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were brought from Spain. The traditional story is that the work on the church was done by angels on a single night, and that the bishop was greatly astonished when he came in the morning and found everything completed. This story, it may be said, is popular throughout Mexico, it being related of many sacred places with the usual incidental variations.

Another legend connected with the Tlaxcalan church is to the effect that a certain bishop pursued by enemies saw the Virgin in the branches of a pine tree. At a critical moment the trunk of the tree opened, closing again after he had hidden within it. His enemies passed by without discovering him or seeing anything unusual. When they had disappeared the tree opened again and let him escape.

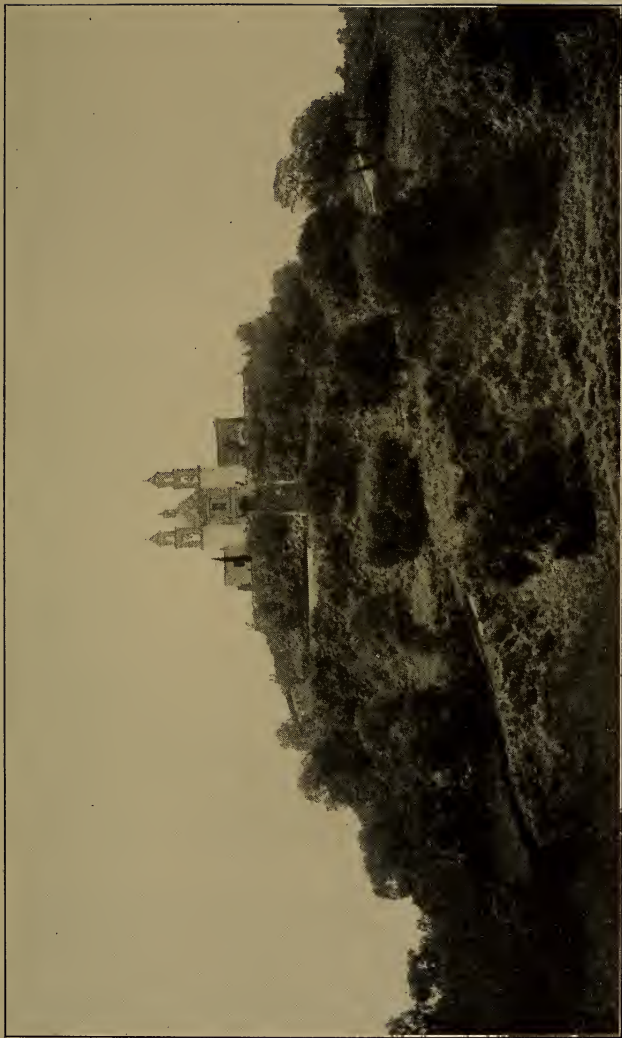
A painting in the church represents the Pope in a triumphal car drawn by a very plump angel. They are passing over the bodies of reformers, Luther and Calvin being dragged behind in chains.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

THE CHURCHES OF CHOLULA

AFTER his defeat of the Tlaxcalans, Cortez, with his force increased to upward of six thousand volunteers from among the Tlaxcalans and the Totonacs, marched westward until he came to the borders of Cholula where he was met by a large number of the native chiefs and their attendants, all of whom appeared friendly. A native young woman by the name of La Marina, who had become Cortez's interpreter and guide, discovered a plot to destroy him and his army. Cortez at once made preparations for defense. Firing off his guns and a cannon he so frightened the natives that they ran in every direction. There were no horses at this time in the New World, and those that the conqueror brought not only surprised but terrified the natives, who when they saw these animals decked out in fantastic trappings and their riders dressed in strange uniforms, believed that their god had returned and was about to punish them for their sins. After shooting down all who tried to escape Cortez renewed his march to Tenochtitlan (Mexico City).

At the time of the coming of Cortez,



Waite Photography. Used by permission

CHOLULA, THE CHURCH ON THE PYRAMID

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Cholula had about 150,000 inhabitants. Its temples were numerous (the Spaniards claimed to have counted 400 towers), and it held a great company of priests. Indeed it was regarded at this time as the holy city of the Aztecs. Its chief temple was the famous pyramid of Cholula, which still remains. When it was built no one knows. It is composed of stone and earth, with alternate strata of brick and clay. The base covers an area of nearly 1,785 feet, and its height is 170 feet. On the summit of the pyramid stood a great temple dedicated to the worship of various gods, among whom was Quetzalcoatl, already referred to, whose influence gradually eliminated human sacrifices, thousands of which at one period had been offered annually.

On this summit of the pyramid there stands a church built by or under the influence of Cortez, and dedicated to the worship of the Virgin de los Remedios. At the present day it is plain and unattractive. Many churches were built in the city of Cholula, some of which are not used now and are falling to decay.

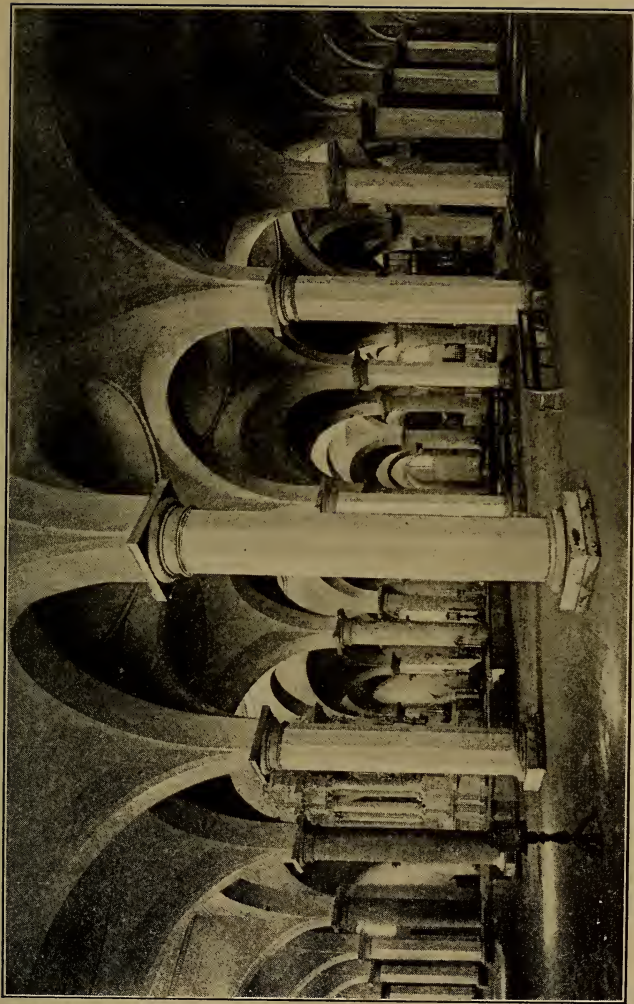
The church of San Gabriel in the center of the city stands in an immense enclosure

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and was built to accommodate a vast concourse of Indian worshipers. It has lost its former glory and is going to ruin. The chapel adjoining has a vaulted roof which is square in plan, supported by sixty-four large columns which form seven naves, and these in turn are surmounted by forty-seven small domes, as seen in the illustration. When one enters this building there seems to be in the bare interior only long lines of stone columns and domes. The style was suggested by the great Mosque of Cordova in Spain.

THE CHURCH OF NAUCALPAN, WITH THE VIRGIN OF REMEDIOS

WHEN Cortez prepared to sail from Spain for the New World he carried in a supply of images of the Virgin Mary which he set up in Aztec sacred places, whence the idols had been dethroned. On the so-called "Noche Triste," the night when it seemed to the Spaniards they would be driven from the capital by the Aztecs, on account of the loss by Cortez of an important battle, an image of the Virgin, known as "La Virgen de los Reme-



THE CHAPEL ROYAL, CHOLULA, PUEBLA

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

dios," mysteriously disappeared. Twelve years later, according to the story, this image was discovered under a maguey, or century plant, by an Indian (Aztec) cacique, or chieftain, who took it to his house and placed it on his domestic altar, where he worshiped it as the Aztec "goddess of water." It suddenly disappeared and was again found under the maguey plant by the cacique, who placed it in a strong box and slept on the lid. It disappeared the second time and was found under its favorite plant. The cacique now communicated the matter to a priest, who ordered the image to be dressed in satins and pearls. Human hair was fastened to the head and a rich crown added. People in great numbers came for miles around to be healed by touching the figure. A church was built for it in 1575. An adjoining temple contained a stone image of the Aztec goddess of water which was worshiped in like manner; but the worship of the Virgin of Remedios increased in interest and the other was finally discarded.

According to common report the Virgin has performed innumerable miracles. In times of drought it was the custom to bring

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the image to Mexico City, about ten miles distant from the church, with the Viceroy on foot leading a procession of some forty thousand to fifty thousand people, including all the highest representatives of the government, the church and the army. As the image passed through the cloisters of the convents the nuns fell upon their knees in humble adoration.

Though the image is less than a foot in height it was the owner of robes said to have cost \$3,000,000. These robes were literally covered with diamonds, pearls, and other precious stones. In view of its traditional liking for the maguey plant a miniature one of silver was constructed for it. It holds in its arms a diminutive figure of the infant Christ.

During the War of Independence, in 1810-1820, the image was chosen by the Spaniards as their emblem, and was called "General of the Royal Army." Hidalgo, the patriot priest, leader of the Revolutionists, on the other hand, set up the Virgin of Guadalupe as the patroness of the Mexicans. These rival Virgins were mounted on horseback in full uniform. The Virgin of Remedios failed to protect the Spaniards or to bring them vic-



DOMES OF CHAPEL ROYAL

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

tory. Disheartened and chagrined, the Spaniards ordered that the image be banished. But the people pleaded so earnestly that it was allowed to remain with its church in spite of its lost prestige. The Virgin of Guadalupe was declared victor. Later, when the Reform Laws were put into effect, the silver railing, the silver maguey pedestal, and the jewels of the Remedios Virgin went into the Government exchequer. Afterwards these revenues aided in the establishment of the present system of secular schools. It remains to be said that the old church is now shorn of its former adornments and has completely lost its former popularity. In 1912 the image was brought to the capital and received in the Cathedral by the dean and dignitaries of the church in the hope of restoring peace to the nation. On March 9, at seven o'clock in the morning, the first function was held, the archbishop officiating as celebrant. At ten o'clock a sermon was preached, followed by another at five. Then a procession filed through the aisles of the Cathedral carrying the image. The archbishop walked under a canopy of silk carried on poles by officials of the church in citizens' garb. For nine days

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these functions continued. The writer witnessed one morning the profound devotion of many worshipers, hundreds of people who were sitting or kneeling on the dusty floor intent upon repeating the prayers from their books. The gates of the chancel were closed to keep out the throng, but men, women, and children stood on the steps leading to the altar, climbed the altar railings, or stretched their arms within the rails endeavoring if possible to touch the sacred figure. A refined elderly gentleman with a lady of mature years by his side stood with his hands clasped upon his breast, his eyes fixed upon the image, the lady reading to him passages from a small book. The tones of her voice were subdued, full of pathos, and at times trembled with intensity of emotion. She paused occasionally to wipe away the great tear drops that coursed down her cheeks. At times she addressed her companion with great feeling, the sentence often ending in a sob. He would bow his head in acquiescence, still gazing with rapture upon the image of the Virgin. Doubtless some relative or friend had joined one of the armies, and this couple were pleading with all the fervor and intensity of their nature

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

for the preservation of these precious lives and the restoration of peace to the nation.

On March 18 the image was taken to the station in an automobile followed by an immense crowd, many of whom accompanied it to the old church, where it was again placed in its now humble shrine.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY

THE CATHEDRAL

THE MONASTERY AND CHURCH OF SAN
FRANCISCO

CHAPTER II

CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY

THE CATHEDRAL

THE Cathedral in Mexico City, one of the largest and most imposing church buildings in the world, occupies the site of an ancient Aztec Temple. The present building was begun in 1573, following the command of Philip II of Spain, but the first service was not held until 1626, the actual consecration of the building taking place nine years later. The building was completed in 1667, its cost exclusive of adornments being estimated at \$2,000,000.

Interesting accounts are given of the transfer of the Cathedral to the church authorities. On January 30, 1656, the dean and the chapter met and were joined by the Viceroy, Cadereita by name, his wife and daughter. The Duke of Albuquerque, whose efforts had helped greatly to push the work of construc-

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tion, in the name of the King, delivered the keys of the building to the chapter. Following this ceremony, the Viceroy, accompanied by his family, proceeded to the presbytery and, kneeling reverently, kissed its first step. Each person then took a broom and proceeded to sweep the presbytery, doubtless in imitation of the Lord's cleansing of the Temple. That the ceremony was largely symbolic may be understood from the record, which states that on the previous day the Viceroy had employed two hundred people to do the work.

When the Cathedral was finally dedicated immense gifts for interior decorations were presented by wealthy Spaniards, gifts aggregating, we are told, for gold and silver ornaments alone, \$1,800,000. José de la Borda, a wealthy miner, gave a chalice covered with gems valued at \$300,000. Later, when de la Borda was in financial straits he asked for the return of the gift, a request which was granted by the archbishop. The chalice was sold for one-third its original cost.

In Colonial times the annual appropriation from the Royal Treasury of Spain for the maintenance of the Cathedral was 18,000 pesos, and one year 13,000 pesos were granted



THE CATHEDRAL, MEXICO CITY

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

by the Crown. The Duke of Albuquerque gave frequent donations, as did other high personages; but much of the money needed for maintenance came from the poor people, in spite of the fact that at that time very little money was in circulation and the Indians were taxed in every conceivable way. Even now one wonders how the expenses of so vast a temple can be met, surrounded as it is by so many other churches.

There are twenty-one bells in the twin towers which reach a height of 204 feet from the pavement. The largest of the bells is 10 feet across and $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and weighs 27,000 pounds. The clapper is 8 feet long and weighs 500 pounds. It was cast in Tacubaya in 1792, and a month was required to raise it to the tower. It is said its sweet tones can be heard six miles away on a clear day. A few years ago other bells were added, and it was most interesting to watch the people examine the pulleys, the immense ropes, and other appliances used in hoisting them from the pavement. Bells are rung in Mexico in a peculiar manner: a rope is attached to the tongue and the ringer pulls at the other end. Then he lets the rope go quickly, which sends

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the tongue against the metal with a harsh, clanging sound.

A number of persons have committed suicide from the Cathedral belfries by flinging themselves out over the parapet and falling on the stone pavement. Recently the authorities ordered that the belfries be inclosed with high railings to prevent these tragedies.

There are seventeen entrances on the three sides of the Cathedral. Its length is 400 feet, its width more than 200, and its height about 180 feet. The high altar is constructed on a grand scale. Green malachite pillars with gold capitals support the dome above the altar. The statue of Our Lady of the Assumption, the patron saint of the Cathedral, cost \$3,000, and six months were required for its construction. The massive railings on each side of the nave are an amalgam of silver, gold, and copper, and were made in China at a cost of over \$1,000,000. The weight is said to be twenty-six tons. At intervals, twenty fluted Doric columns, 18 feet in circumference and 180 feet in height, support the arches in the center. Seven ornamented chapels on each side contain paintings encased in massive gilt frames. The choir, en-

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

riched with alternate wood and stone carvings, obstructs the view of the imposing high altar. Light comes only from very high windows near the dome. The organ is said to have 3,500 pipes. The huge doors called storm doors are twenty-five feet high.

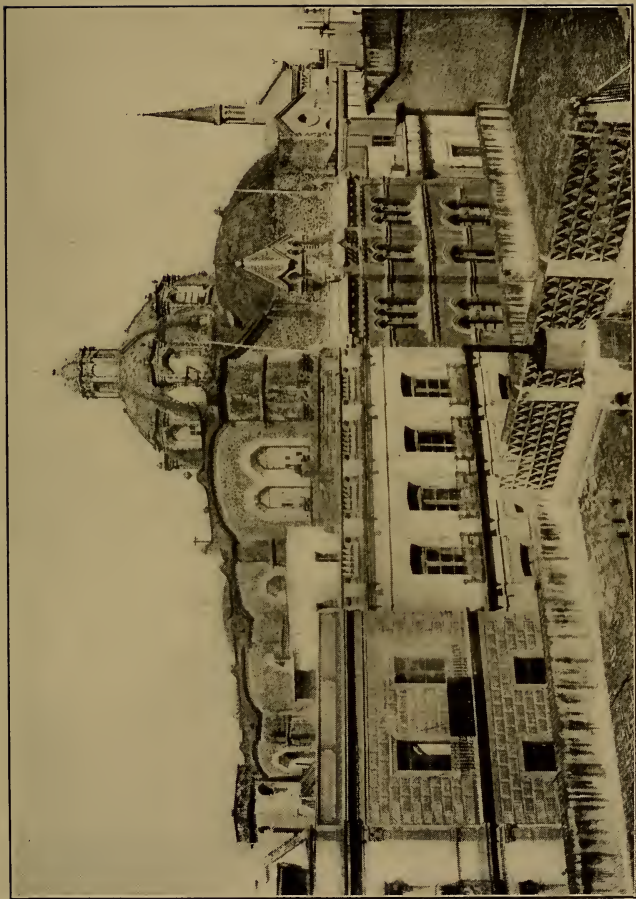
Among the numerous paintings in the Cathedral is one known as the Christ of the Cacao-beans (*El Señor del Cacao*), which was purchased with the proceeds of the sale of an enormous lot of these beans when they were used as money by certain Mexican tribes. In one of the chapels of the Cathedral is an image of the Virgin with face and hands of ivory. In the *Sagrario* is a small image of a woman, dressed in a hair shirt, holding in one hand a disciplina, or scourge, and in the other a crucifix. A rosary hangs from her girdle.

One of the characteristic ceremonies connected with the Cathedral and perhaps the most spectacular of any, is the *Lavatorio*, or washing of the feet of twelve poor men on Friday of Holy Week. A carpeted space is partitioned off with benches. The twelve barefooted men are dressed in coarse dark cassocks. A silver basin and pitcher are car-

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

ried respectively by a deacon and subdeacon. Two candles are lighted upon the altar and the venerable dean of the Cathedral canons intones a few scriptural verses. Girding himself with a towel, he then proceeds to wash the feet of these men in imitation of Christ washing the feet of his disciples. The right foot of the first man is placed in the silver basin and water is poured upon it from the pitcher. The dean then dries the man's foot and kisses it; the deacon and subdeacon follow his example. These three priests, still kneeling, move slowly to the next man and continue the ceremony with the remainder of the men, who then retire to the sacristy where each one is given a piece of money by the priests.

Of all the churches of the country, the Cathedral of Mexico is the church of the common people, by whom it was largely constructed. Even in the days when it was the church of the élite and the fashionable of the city, the poor were found there in great numbers. Women coming from the market may be seen kneeling on the wooden floor with their baskets of provisions on their arms or at their sides. Peones in their workaday garb



DOMES OF SAN FRANCISCO CHURCH, TRINITY CHURCH IN THE
FOREGROUND

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

will be found kneeling by the side of men in fashionable attire. Poor mothers with their dirty and unkempt children can be observed squatting together in a heap with aristocratic ladies kneeling near by. During mass a stream of people pass in and out wending their way between the crowd of kneeling worshipers.

The Cathedral has been the scene of many stirring incidents and important historical events. It was here that Maximilian, who was chosen by Louis Napoleon to be ruler of Mexico, was crowned emperor, and his wife Carlota empress of Mexico. On the night of this event the plaza, on whose west side the Cathedral is located, assumed a gala appearance, but the ancient church outstripped it in brilliancy, for from its foundation to its highest pinnacle lamps were burned and innumerable bells pealed forth their welcome.

THE MONASTERY AND CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO

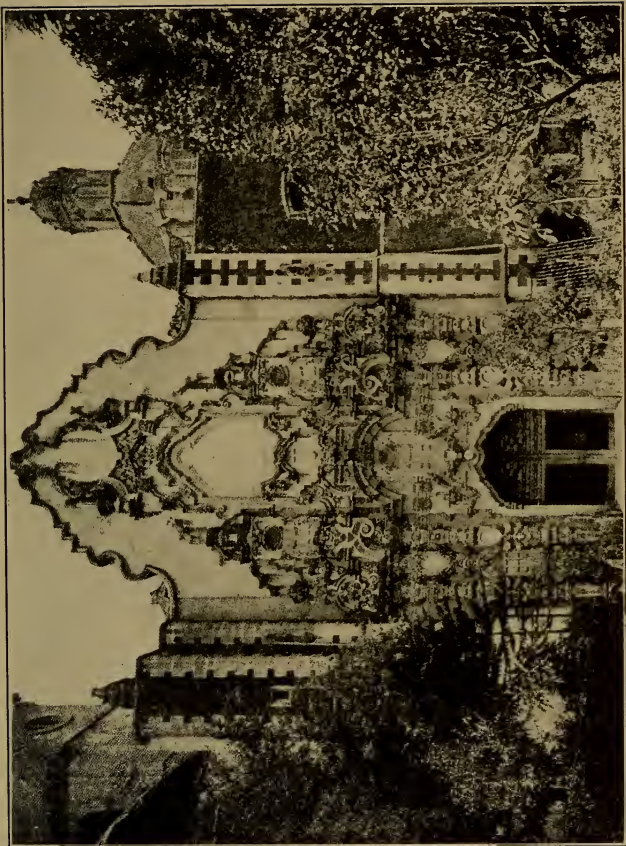
ON December 27, 1908, there appeared in one of the daily papers of Mexico City the following paragraph:

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

“Laborers are tearing down the thick walls of the south eastern portion of El Gran Convento de México, the old Franciscan monastery, the most venerated, the richest in historical associations, the most zealous in mission work among the Indians, the largest, and in every sense the most interesting monastery in the New World.”

These walls covered an area of four city blocks and had sunk by their own weight (some of the walls being ten feet thick) a considerable distance into the spongy subsoil. The monastery was built on the site of Moctezuma's (the Aztec Emperor) palace, the galleries of which were supported on immense stone pillars and opened into gardens with palms and fountains. The land was given by Cortez to the Franciscan monks who accompanied him from Spain. The building materials were taken mostly from the great teocalli dedicated to the worship of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of war.

One of the builders of the monastery was Friar Pedro de Gante (reputed son of Charles V of Spain), who is credited with having built one hundred churches and chapels in Mexico, and having established



FAÇADE OF SAN FRANCISCO CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the first primary school not only in Mexico but on this continent.

The San Franciscan Foundation, which took upward of two hundred years to complete, contained an immense church and seven large chapels, with additional chapels in the residences of the Superior and other officials, together with dormitories capable of accommodating five hundred monks, whose cells extended over two entire blocks. The entire Foundation, which included stables, orchards, and gardens, was enclosed by massive stone walls.

How the great Church of San Francisco impressed a visitor is shown by the account written by Madame de Calderon, the American wife of the first Spanish minister to Mexico, who visited the church on Holy Thursday in the year 1840:

“This church of the old Franciscan Monastery is very splendid and the walls were hung with canvas paintings. Before the altar, which was dazzling with jewels, was a representation of the Lord’s Supper, not in painting but in sculptured figures as large as life, habited in Jewish dresses. The bishop and priests were in a blaze of gold and jewels.”

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

An anecdote of the renowned Viceroy Revillagigedo may serve to show not only how strictly he performed the duties of his office, but also the intimate relation of church and state in that period. The Viceroy frequently went about incognito, attended by one or two aides-de-camp. By his order no monk could be out of his convent after vespers. Walking one evening on the street, he encountered a monk in a San Franciscan street, enjoying the evening with boon companions. The Viceroy deliberately turned his steps in the direction of the convent. He proceeded at once to attend to the business in hand and asked the abbot, "How many monks have you in your convent, Father?"

"Fifty, your Excellency."

"There are now only forty-nine," replied the Viceroy. "Call their names, see which is the missing brother, and let his name be struck out."

When the list was called only forty-five monks responded to their names. By order of the Viceroy the five monks were never again admitted to the convent.

On account of a plot against President Comonfort, disclosed September 14, 1856, the

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

monastery was suppressed. A few months later a monster petition was presented to the President asking that the monks be allowed to reopen it. This was granted, but with restrictions. Four years later Benito Juarez, the leader of the Liberal party, with some of his staff, visited the convent and demanded admission. The monks made no response. Then with pickax and crowbar a place in one of the walls was opened to admit the soldiers. Crossing the garden, they made similar openings in the opposite walls. Two streets were then cut through the heart of the convent. One was named for Friar Gante and the other was called "Independencia," to emphasize the liberty which the Reform party had achieved. The property was mapped out and the lots were sold at extremely low prices, the sum total being less than \$350,000. Stores, churches, hotels, and dwellings went up as fast as the purchasers could build. The land alone is now enormously valuable.

One of the purchasers of this property was the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whose selection, one hundred and eighty feet in depth and eighty feet

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in width, fronted on the Calle de Gante, just off San Francisco Street, and opposite the Hotel Iturbide, once the palace of the Emperor Iturbide. This purchase represented about one-fiftieth of the entire San Francisco Foundation.

The Church of San Francisco, which joins this property in the rear and fronts on San Francisco Street, still remains, but with its façade shorn of ornaments, including the statues of the saints, and with trees and shrubbery taking the place of the paved atrium, and pigeons occupying the niches. The interior has been modernized, the elaborate decorations of the early period being replaced by a more up-to-date display.

Entering the vestibule of the church, one will see on the right a broad flight of stairs. At the head of this stairway hangs a large crucifix with a life-size image of Christ, with the Virgin on the right. On Good Friday the gates at the foot of the stairs are opened, when a notice is seen which reads: "The Holy Stairs will be open for the devotion of the faithful from six o'clock Friday morning till six in the afternoon. Those who ascend on their knees will gain the same indulgences as



VESTIBULE OF THE OLD SAN FRANCISCO MONASTERY

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are conceded at the Holy Stairs in Rome." The devotees, after reaching the top, deposit money on a tray, and walk down another stairway. All day long and far into the night fashionably dressed men and women climb these stairs repeating prayers. At night thousands of people make the rounds of churches again, believing that the salvation of their souls is made surer by the number of churches they visit during these two days, as well as by the number of prayers they offer.

The church of San Felipe de Jesus, adjoining this building, occupies the site of two chapels of the old Monastery and was built upon the old foundations, under the auspices of the Jesuits. The façade is modern, the rear walls being built of fragments of the old chapels referred to. On religious feast days the Church of San Felipe is filled with the aristocracy of the city, whose carriages and automobiles line the streets for blocks each way.

It will be of interest to recall that the principal theater in the City of Mexico had its origin in the miracle and biblical plays of the San Francisco Monastery, which were performed to teach the people the legends connected with their worship.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY
(CONTINUED)

THE CHURCH OF SANTA TERESA DE LA ANTIGUA

THE CHURCH OF SAN AGUSTIN

THE CONVENT AND CHURCH OF JESUS MARIA

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY (CONTINUED)

CHURCH OF SANTA TERESA DE LA ANTIGUA

OF almost more interest than anything connected with this church is the fact that the first printing press in the New World was established in the corner house adjoining the sacred edifice. It was brought from Europe at the request of Bishop Zumarraga in 1536, by Viceroy Mendoza. The first printer was Juan Paoli of Brescia, Italy, who was sent to Mexico by Comberger. The first printed book appeared in 1536. The Spanish missionaries made good use of the press, which was active nearly a century before a similar establishment was set up in the United States. The church was built upon the site of the palace of Axayactl, the father of Moctezuma. In this palace were a multitude of idols to which, though they had no separate temple, various

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feasts were dedicated. In this spacious and magnificent palace the Spaniards were beleaguered in 1519. After the Conquest most of the idols were broken and destroyed.

The conquerors held here their first Holy Week services after entering the Valley of Mexico. The church was founded upon the tradition of a marvelous crucifix and image. According to the authorized legend, a gentleman of noble family and heroic deeds brought from the kingdom of Castilla in 1545 among other sacred images one called the Holy Crucifix. It was placed in a church in the town of Cardonax, state of Hidalgo, in 1556, and remained there till 1621.

The image went by the name of the many mining districts in which it was located, and at last became known as the Holy Christ of Ixmiquilpan, occupying a crypt near the high altar of the church there. The legend is that at the end of sixty years, having been sadly neglected, it had become very black and disfigured, so that it looked like a burned object. The face had lost its mouth, nose, and eyes, which had been gnawed away by the mice that infested the old church. Only the beard was left. There was scarcely anything but

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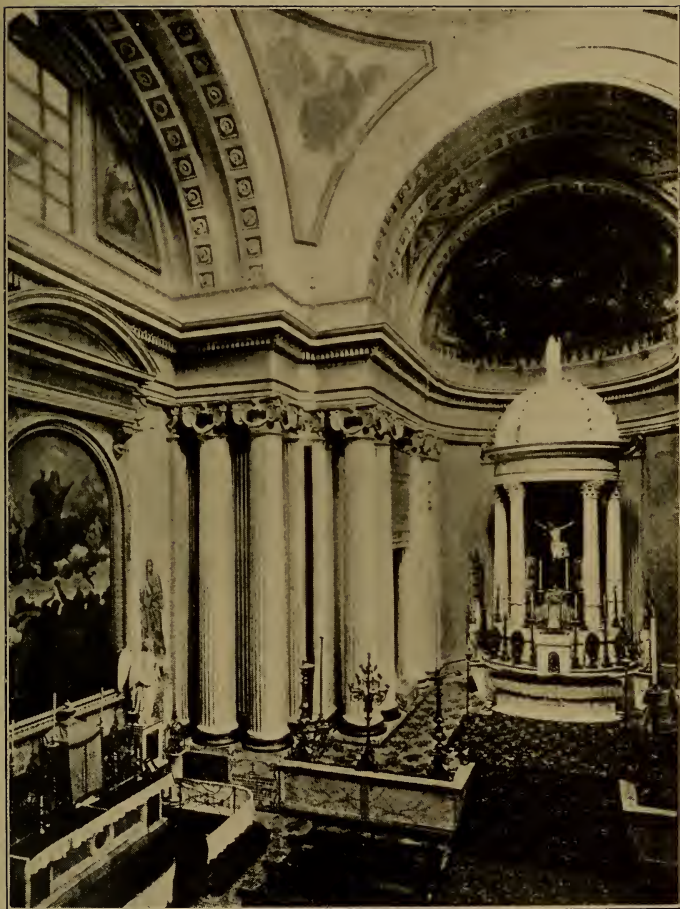
the tradition that it had been an image of our Lord.

When the Archbishop of Mexico visited the mine in 1615 he realized that it was a most improper object for veneration or worship. He therefore ordered that it be buried with the body of the first great person who died. For five years the order could not be carried out, as no such person died. Finally, the little town of Ixmiquilpan was stirred by a great sensation. People had heard sounds from the church, such as groans, sighs, blows, sobs, and ringing of bells. The curate, on his rather infrequent visits, paid no attention to these reports and even ridiculed them. Some families became so frightened that they moved to another vicinity. The curate was at last compelled to face the situation. Going to the church one night, he himself heard the strange sounds. He ran to the neighbors exclaiming, "My children, there are thieves in the church, come with me." Nothing unusual was discovered, and the crowd dispersed but the curate remained. At last, while standing near the image and lamenting its unsightly condition, he thought he noted a change. A neighbor came from behind the altar and,

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

lighting a candle, remarked, "Señor Cura, there is water on the image." Both looked carefully and simultaneously exclaimed, "The Christ is perspiring; it has renovated itself." Great was their astonishment to find a perfectly restored figure in the place of the former hideous object.

The people gathered, some awe-struck, others incredulous. Then the eyes of the image opened and the lips moved as though it were endeavoring to speak. The body swayed toward the altar and it was decided that it wished to be placed there. The sick were brought before it and were healed. The lame returned to their homes walking upright. The blind received their sight and a dead person was actually restored to life. The curate hesitated to inform the Archbishop lest he be censured for taking part in the restoration of the image. A document was therefore drawn up and over seventy testimonies were given in proof of the miracle. The Archbishop declared that the image must be brought to Mexico City and placed in a suitable shrine. But the people of the mining districts adored it so much for its miraculous interpositions that they determined to fight



A CORNER OF SANTA TERESA CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the messengers. Finally, when threatened with excommunication, they desisted. The worshipers increased so fast that a chapel on the present site was built and dedicated May 17, 1813. Though the figure restored itself and could heal all kinds of infirmities, it was injured in the earthquake of April 7, 1845, which came near demolishing the chapel and almost destroying the image itself.

To the satisfaction of the faithful, most of the parts were found and taken to the convent, where the nuns shed copious tears over the misfortune. However, a sculptor was summoned with numerous artisans, and after long and most careful work, the separate parts were united.

The image remained in the Cathedral till it was finally placed on the restored altar May 9, 1858, in its present resting place in the chapel of the Church of Santa Teresa de la Antigua, Mexico City.

The picture here presented gives only one corner of the chapel. On the high altar is seen the holy image under the marble baldachin. Above the high altar in the vaulted ceiling is a painting depicting one of the events in the renovation of the image. The

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

second circle in the vault is filled with gilded pateras. Three rows of small electric lamps follow the arched lines, others cross diagonally the cupola of the shrine on the altar.

On the vaulted roof of the dome, over the center of the nave, is a painting of God the Father, surrounded with the virtues of the fifth celestial choir. The stained-glass windows are superb, the allegorical figures representing astronomy, history, poetry, and music. In the spandrels appear some of the apostles. Along the arches of the choir are seven allegorical paintings of the passion of Christ. The Latin inscription around the circle, beneath the windows, reads: "*Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.*"

In the center of each of the two lateral altars is a very large oil painting, one representing the transfiguration of Christ, the other the ascension of the Virgin. Finely wrought statues are on all the altars. The Doric fluted pillars in the four corners stand out beyond colossal inner columns. Each base is colored in red and gold. The cornices are gilded, and festoons of gilt flowers are looped at the corners. The chapel is richly carpeted, adding elegance to this wonderful shrine—prob-

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ably, in its entirety, the finest in the City of Mexico.

THE CHURCH OF SAN AGUSTIN

THE Church of San Agustin is situated in the very heart of the city, fronting on two prominent streets, with the old atrium converted into an ornamental garden extending



SAN AGUSTIN CHURCH

the entire length of the building. The whole property is inclosed by an iron fence whose twenty posts are surmounted by busts of Aztec and Mexican celebrities. A fine statue of Baron Humboldt, the gift of the German

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colony, was placed in the garden at the time of Mexico's Centennial Celebration in 1910.

The original church was built by the Augustinian Order in the year 1541, but like so many of the older churches it was destroyed by fire and was rebuilt during the years from 1677 to 1692. The present edifice is in the form of a Greek cross, the façade still retaining the decorations of the ancient building, and having as its central figure an imposing statue of San Agustin in bishop's robes standing in the midst of monks who bow before him in adoration. He holds in the palm of his left hand a miniature stone church, while at each shoulder is an angel in the act of holding up his cloak, which is painted to represent the drop curtain of a theater.

Formerly the Church of San Agustin was one of the wealthiest in the country, possessing much real estate and many superb paintings. It is said that the carved walnut choir, which contained two hundred and fifty stalls decorated with carvings representing scenes from the Old Testament, cost \$240,000.

When Benito Juarez was President of Mexico, the then Minister of Justice petitioned him to establish in San Agustin a

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National Library, which would house among other books the collection from the suppressed monasteries. As all church property, according to the Laws of Reform, had been taken over by the government, it only remained for Congress to set apart by formal action the church to the use proposed, which was done.

The choir was removed to the National Preparatory School and the magnificent paintings of the church and convent were transferred to the Academy of Fine Arts. It took fifteen years to prepare the building for the reception of the books which had been stored in the Church of the Tercer Orden, situated at the extreme end of the garden. In 1909 this latter structure was renovated and opened for night use, thus meeting some of the demands upon the main building.

One familiar with the interior of San Agustin in its ecclesiastic days would hardly recognize it now. On either side of the entrance are medallion portraits. A partition across the entrance separates the main portal from the reading room, which is 160 feet long, 40 feet wide and 100 feet high. Oak desks with seats extend its entire length. On the balustrade of the choir is a colossal statue of

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Flying Time, balanced on a globe with an iron pivot through the sole of the left foot, so strongly poised that none of the many severe earthquake shocks have injured it. Three flights of wooden stairs lead to a room over the choir, the sides of which are lined with bookshelves. Two small tables with chairs accommodate the readers, while a large window in the rear gives ample light. The chapels on each side of the nave have been turned into alcoves with bookshelves. Sixteen statues representing some of the fathers of learning stand on pedestals at the base of the supporting columns—among them Confucius, Isaiah, Homer, Plato, Paul, Aristophanes, Cuvier, and Humboldt.

The collection of books, while not large, contains many volumes both valuable and rare. There are immense volumes, every one of whose letters was made with a pen. One book contains the autograph signatures of the soldiers of Cortez. A roll of deer-skin shows the original picture-writing of the Aztecs. It may be added that about twenty thousand persons annually avail themselves of the privileges of this library which was once a church.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

THE CONVENT AND CHURCH OF JESUS MARÍA

THE Convent of Jesus María was founded in 1577 by two men who purposed that only the descendants of the conquerors should be the inmates. One of the early nuns was said to be the daughter of Philip II of Spain and a niece of Archbishop Pedro Moya de Contreras, Viceroy of Mexico and first Inquisitor General. Large sums for the support of the convent were given from the Royal Treasury of Spain and the Viceroyal Exchequer of Mexico.

From the dome hangs an old-fashioned chandelier of solid metal of great weight. Candles are in the sockets, but electric lamps now hang from the pendants. Under a very fine grilled balcony from which the nuns used to hear mass is the entrance to a small chapel. In the background is a miniature of the Virgin at the grotto of Lourdes, with a female figure kneeling in the foreground holding a rosary offering.

The church, which was renovated as late as 1900, has its dome and ceiling covered with small paintings inclosed in gilt moldings which fill squares, spandrels, and half-circles,

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

interspersed with gilt pateras. The stained-glass doors and windows are of exquisite coloring.

The Church of Jesus María has for its patron saint, "El Niño Perdido" ("The Lost Child"), a painting back of the altar representing the child Jesus before the doctors in the temple. On the side altar is the image of La Santísima Virgen del Rayo. According to the legend, at two o'clock of August 18, 1807, during a terrific thunderstorm, this figure was seen to change its position, to smile and otherwise manifest a lively interest, with the result that the people give the Virgin credit for saving the church on that occasion. Many miraculous cures are attributed to her. Just a century after this noted thunderstorm she was crowned with solemn ceremonies.

At a service held on the afternoon of the second of November, 1910, "All Saints' Day," at the base of the large altar there rested a catafalque covered with black velveteen with a band of white stitched upon it in the form of a cross. Black cloth curtains hung about the church, covering all the images. A large painting on canvas stretched across the main altar representing people, life-size, standing

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

up to their waists in purgatorial flames. Some were chained by their wrists. Two angels stood in the midst, each clasping with one hand the hand of one of the persons and with the other pointing heavenward. Burning candles



CHURCH AT CAMPO FLORIDO, MEXICO CITY,
SHOWING EFFECTS OF THE BOMBARD-
MENT DURING THE "TRAGIC TEN
DAYS" OF 1910

behind the picture made the flames appear highly realistic.

Purgatory is a very real place to the average Mexican. The profits of a certain business house in Mexico City were devoted, during seventy-five years, to the payment of masses

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

for the soul of the founder. It is not uncommon, even now, in country parishes to find on church doors notices of a "Raffle of Souls," by which is meant that, on the payment of a certain sum, a ticket is issued which guarantees the owner a chance to win the main prize in the drawing—this prize being masses for the escape of a soul from purgatory.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY
(CONTINUED)

THE CHURCH OF SANTO DOMINGO

THE CHURCH AND HOSPITAL OF JESUS
NAZARENO

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY (CONTINUED)

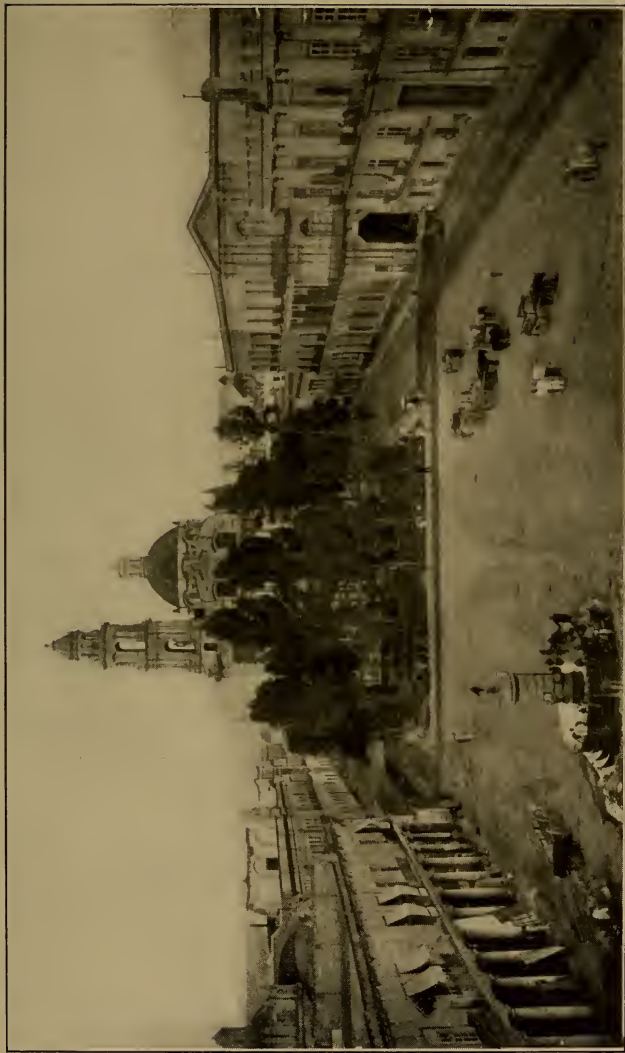
THE CHURCH OF SANTO DOMINGO

THE Church of Santo Domingo, though one of the oldest, is still one of the largest and finest in the capital and is attended by a majority of the Spanish residents. It contains a magnificently carved and decorated altar and some fine old paintings. An image of Christ reclines at full length in a glass case in one of the side altars. The hand is bandaged, and the feet, which project from under the coverlet, are fashioned in dark colored ivory with extremely white nails. Women and children, and even men, have kissed these protruding feet so often that they are gradually wearing away. Another image of Christ, nude, save for a scarf about the loins, represents him in a sitting posture, thorn-crowned and blood-stained, the whole attitude being one of deep dejection.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

On the eighth of September the Spanish celebrate here the Mass of the Virgin of Covadonga. The renown of this Virgin is due to the historic battle won by Pelayo, King of the Asturias, over the Moors. The battle was fought at the entrance to the cave of Covadonga, the Moors hurling rocks, arrows, and darts against the mouth of the cave where the King and his followers were sheltered. The power of the Virgin, the legend reads, was on the side of the Spaniards, so that the Moorish missiles recoiled upon the Moors themselves, causing great havoc in their ranks. The Christians then issued from their hiding place and completely routed the enemy.

The statue of the Virgin of Covadonga, venerated in Santo Domingo, is made of wood and is a replica of the one in Spain. It is a little over three feet in height, including a pedestal and a half moon of solid silver. The dress is made of gold and silver brocade with a mantle of garnet-colored satin brocaded in silver falling from the shoulders over the back. A mantilla of white Spanish lace is held in place by a diadem of gold, studded with jewels, resting upon her head. In her right hand is a golden scepter, and in the left the



CHURCH AND PLAZA OF SANTO DOMINGO

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

miniature image of the Christ-child, dressed in costly material.

On one occasion the writer was present when the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Ridolfi, officiated, assisted by other high functionaries. All were magnificently attired in ceremonial dress (rather than the usual ecclesiastical garments) adorned with epaulets, gold braid trimmings, and medals, and with swords at their sides. Monsignor Ridolfi did not take a position before the altar. The breviary from which he read the responses was held and even the leaves were turned for him by assistants. At the mass the archbishop and other officials were arrayed in superb chasubles heavily embroidered in raised flowers of gold thread, under which was a tunic of Spanish lace. A number of times during the service the vestures of the Apostolic Delegate were changed. One priest would remove a vestment while another quickly replaced it, the Delegate all the while standing at his place in full view of the congregation. The bowing and prostrating of the assistants appeared to honor him supremely.

The Dominicans, whose founder was honored in the Church of Santo Domingo, were

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

responsible for the founding of the Inquisition in Mexico in 1736, in headquarters opposite the church, the latter occupied by the tribunal. The burning-place of the Inquisition was on the ground which is now occupied by the Alameda, a well-known small park in the center of the city. The first burning was in 1574, when twenty-one "pestilential Lutherans" were burned alive. The braser was a large platform of stone masonry with stakes or posts to which the victims were fastened, in full view of the populace. After the work was done the ashes were thrown into the marsh, then located near the Church of San Diego, which is still standing at the west end of the Alameda. In one of the Santo Domingo buildings there was a courtyard with twenty arches and nineteen cells, where the prisoners were removed from time to time that they might enjoy the sun, but where they could not communicate with nor see one another. The Inquisition in Mexico was abolished in 1821.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

THE CHURCH AND HOSPITAL OF JESUS NAZARENO

THE buildings which constitute the Church and Hospital of Jesus Nazareno were founded in 1593 with funds which Cortez left, and on the site where he is believed to have first met Moctezuma, the Aztec emperor. The land was a grant by Charles V of Spain.

The church is long, with two aisles, but without a nave, and there are no columns in the main building. The arches of the vaulted roof meet, being supported by fluted pilasters in the side walls. In general, the church has suffered little from renovators. The old altar and the large tabernacle are still in place. Above the altar steps is the monstrance covered in white satin and gold. Near the ceiling, under a curtained canopy, is an image of Christ with the pathetic face capped by a dingy brown wig, under the customary crown of thorns. An immense glass case over one of the altars contains the image of Christ on the cross and is called "Our Lord of the Vindicated," and from a tablet at the base we learn that on the night of November 7, 1732, there was a great earthquake and drops of blood

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

exuded from the wounded side of the Christ. When the blood was wiped off there appeared numerous little red crosses. This image was held in high regard by the Conde del Valle de Orizaba, who lived in the magnificent blue-tiled house, still in perfect condition, now the home of the Jockey Club. The Conde presented the image to the Church of San Francisco, but it was later placed in its present position, where it is covered with silver objects attesting its miracle-working power.

Upon another altar, in dark and ancient attire, is a small figure called "Our Lady of the Bullet," which is held in profound veneration. It was the patron saint in the home of a poor family living long ago in Ixtapalapa, a suburb of Mexico City. The husband charged his wife with infidelity. When he raised his gun to shoot her she fled to the image, which received the bullet intended for her. This incident convinced the husband that his wife was innocent, and ever after the couple lived happily together.

Men of note are buried here. Twenty-five mortuary tablets may be counted in the walls, but none are to be discovered in the floor. Some of these tablets are from eight to ten

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

feet high and from four to six feet wide, and cost large sums. Sitting midway in the church one has the sensation of being in a pantheon.

At one time the bones of Cortez rested here, being interred in the marble sepulcher in the wall at the right of the main altar. This was in accordance with the will of Cortez, which provided that should he die in Spain his remains after ten years were to be brought to Mexico. He died in 1547, but it was not until 1562 that his wishes respecting his body were carried out. His remains were first deposited in the Church of San Francisco at Texcoco. Seven years later they were transferred to the monastery of San Francisco, Mexico City, and then, in 1794, to the Church of Jesus Nazareno. When the Hidalgo Revolution in the early part of the nineteenth century took place, so much hatred against everything Spanish was engendered that Cortez's remains were removed to Spain and finally buried in Italy.

The Hospital is contained in two buildings of the same size and appearance with double patios, or open courts, after the Spanish style. The wide rooms and quaint corridors overlook luxuriant trees and shrubbery. If not the

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

first hospital in America, this is the first of which there are reliable records. The trained attendants and scientific methods of to-day add efficiency to its historical prestige. The Sisters of Charity of the order of "Las Antiguas de los Desamparados (Forsaken)" are in charge. They are from Spain and greatly venerate a picture of the Virgin of this name.

The hospital is maintained by revenues from property conveyed to Cortez by the Spanish Crown and by him to the hospital. Many attempts by government and individuals to break the will of Cortez have proved futile, the document being sustained by the Mexican courts as late as 1885. The property is under a special corporation, and the Italian Dukes of Ferranova é Montaleone still have the right to name an agent to supervise the hospital.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY
(CONTINUED)

THE CHURCH OF LA SOLEDAD

THE CHURCH OF THE BLACK CHRIST

THE CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN OF "LA
CANDELARITA"

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCHES OF MEXICO CITY (CONTINUED)

THE CHURCH OF LA SOLEDAD

THE Virgin of Solitude who is worshiped in this church is a small figure dressed in robes of black velvet embroidered in flowers and vines of gold thread.

The miracles attributed to this Virgin are evidenced by many testimonials displayed on the walls at both sides of the entrance and over the doors. These are in the form of paintings on common tin and are of the poorest execution, the inscriptions themselves being crudely printed and in very poor Spanish. All sorts of ailments are represented as having been cured by the Virgin, sometimes after treatment and often without any medical attendance. Many accidents are depicted, such as a man under the wheels of a coach, attacked by bandits, or a woman falling head-foremost from a high elevation. These pictures fill hundreds of square feet, showing

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

innumerable catastrophes averted through the intervention of the Virgin of La Soledad. As these small tin paintings cover the walls from



PRIMITIVE BELFRY

base to ceiling (aside from hundreds that have necessarily been removed), one can form some idea of the thousands of miracles attributed to this Virgin.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

A narrow curved passage leads from the main building to a room where are sold rosaries, tracts, and pictures. These walls are also filled with crude testimonials. One of very recent date shows an isolated spot in a romantic ravine. A mountain is on one side, at the base of which lies a huge boulder. A man in white shirt and trousers and with wide brimmed sombrero stands with his gun aimed at the great rock. The Virgin appears at the left. A man in uniform and another in a white suit stand at the right with hands spread out, showing fear and amazement. The explanation is that the man in uniform, an officer, was taken prisoner in Durango by the rebel forces. When they stood him up against the boulder, he implored the protection of the Virgin of Soledad. She quickly thrust him to one side and the ball entered the rock. The writer asked the woman in charge if these paintings could be bought. "O, no," she replied, "they are votive offerings." Pointing to one recently received, she continued, "This woman fell in a fit. While in the terrible throes of suffering the Virgin appeared and the woman was immediately healed, hence this testimony of gratitude."

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Like all the others it is a personal acknowledgment of the Virgin's assistance. In a small glass case on the table stood a very dark, highly polished figure of the Virgin. Noting the exquisite carving of the features and the embroidered designs on the robes, I remarked, "I have never seen anything like this." She exultantly exclaimed: "O, no, it is the only one in Mexico. It is carved wood in its natural color and was made by a prisoner in San Juan de Ulua, Vera Cruz." On both sides of the main altar on the wall there hang large frames like bulletin boards upon which are placed these votive offerings in fanciful designs, hundreds of silver or gold figures representing various parts of the human body and even bodies of animals, which show the kinds of miracles wrought. At the right of the entrance to the church, in a large frame, are four embossed figures. In the foreground is an image of Christ just taken from the cross. Mary the Mother, with hands clasped and intense sorrow depicted on her face, is on her knees bending over him. The other Mary, in an agony of grief, clasps his feet. John kneels at the head, holding a handkerchief and weeping. The group is finely executed,

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the features and figures having none of the repulsive aspect so often found on images in Mexican churches, and it was all the more attractive as the janitor had just given it a good scrubbing.

On each side of the aisles, facing the short nave, are images on pedestals. The one called "The Christ of the Column" shows the back of the statue terribly lacerated as with a scourge. The tassels upon the robe worn by the figure are kissed by hundreds daily, so they are now completely blackened. San Antonio and his faithful dog stand on another pedestal, with the bread for the poor. The floor is covered with cement, but even this has broken away in places, owing to the enormous crowds that are continually passing. Two handsome fountains of onyx for the holy water rest on pedestals.

In former times bandits frequented this church and criminals were in the habit of wearing a scapular with the image of the Virgin of Solitude. The following incident is well accredited: when General Santa Ana was dictator of Mexico a great sensation was created by the report that bandits had assaulted the train of wagons going to Vera

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Cruz and that a considerable amount of money had been stolen. The police tried to apprehend the culprits but without success. The governor of the district, however, happened to discover the name of the person who paid for the masses the day previous to the robbery. In course of time it was revealed that this man was the one who led the bandits.

On the very plain façade of the church is a stone image of the Virgin, with a sorrowful, downcast face. She is costumed in a wide skirt and flowing cape. The Spanish inscription reads: "None may pass this place without affirming upon their life that Mary was conceived without original sin."

THE CHURCH OF THE BLACK CHRIST

THIS church was founded by the Dominican Order in the year 1690. It is a small edifice, wedged in between large stone buildings. It has a single dome and one high altar. The street on which the church is located is known as Porta Coeli (Gate of Heaven). It is hardly that. A market known as the "thieves market" is opposite the church, and the large majority of the people who attend

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the service are poverty-stricken and unclean. Hundreds of them every day kneel before the image of the Christ, which is black, so designed, doubtless, to attract the dark-skinned Indians. (There are two other similar black images in the Republic.)

On the image of Christ appears the following inscription: "The Lord of Poison, which is Venerated in the Street of Porta Coeli, Mexico City." According to the story published by the church authorities, an archbishop who resided in Mexico many years ago had enemies who wished to take his life. He had in his home a beautifully carved ivory image of Christ. Every morning he would kiss its feet and implore its protection. His enemies contrived to put poison on the feet of this image, with the expectation that when he kissed them his death would ensue. When the archbishop went to the crucifix, as was his custom, he found the image had turned black from the effects of the poison—a miraculous interposition which saved his life.

On November 10, 1905, the position of the image was changed to an altar on the left of the entrance to the church, the announcement reading: "Solemn Service in the Church of

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Porta Coeli next Friday, the 10th, when the altar dedicated to the Señor del Veneno (poison) will be blessed by His Excellency, the Señor Apostolic Delegate." Great drops of sweat are said to appear on this image from time to time, which is believed to be a miracle.

THE CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN OF "THE CANDELARITA"

HOW SOME MIRACLES HAPPEN

IN one of the daily papers of Mexico City, in May, 1912, appeared the following:

"Near the heart of Mexico City, in a business locality, and wedged in between tenement houses, is a small church fifty meters square. Here is seen the image of the Virgin dressed in cloth of gold, while the image of the child Jesus wears a costly robe.

"On the morning of the first of May, 1912, the curate of this church, returning from the Archbishop's residence, entered the little church for his customary devotions. To his great surprise he found the image swaying. At first he thought it must be only his imagination. Calling the sacristan and some neighbors, it proved to be a fact. The image



VIRGIN OF LA SOLEDAD DE SANTA CRUZ

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

swayed as though rocking an infant to sleep. The movements began at ten in the morning and continued till three in the afternoon, from the second to the fifth day consecutively.

“The following Sunday morning, during mass, the swaying was renewed. The congregation became so excited over the strange spectacle that the curate was compelled to call for the assistance of the police. The following day the Archbishop sent a representative to investigate the phenomenon. The image was taken down to see if it was in normal condition. Nothing was discovered to cause the movements, but when the image was replaced the swaying began again. The representative returned to the Archbishop and reported the above facts. The curate asked the prelate if he should close the church. The reply was that it would be better to keep it open, in order that the people might have the satisfaction of witnessing it. One woman in particular was so overcome that she cried out: ‘O, Holy Mother, what wonderful miracle are you performing? Is it that there will be an end to the fighting in Chihuahua?’

“An unbeliever remarked that it might be only a rat’s nest under the statue. A German

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

doctor was of the opinion that a strong breeze caused the swaying. Another bystander suggested that it might be owing to vibrations caused by the machinery in a mill fifty meters away. These opinions were received with scoffing. Later in the day so many had assembled that more policemen were required to keep order. The people had become frenzied with excitement; they hooted and threw stones. The policemen fired shots to intimidate the crowd which had now increased to over a thousand, and one man was seriously wounded. Mounted police then arrived on the scene and the mob was finally dispersed. The next day a government official visited the church and ordered the boards of the floor taken up. He found that wires had been laid underground and connected with the machinery of the mill, which, when put in motion, caused the vibrations which swayed the image."

CHAPTER VI

THE CHAPEL ON THE HILL,
GUADALUPE

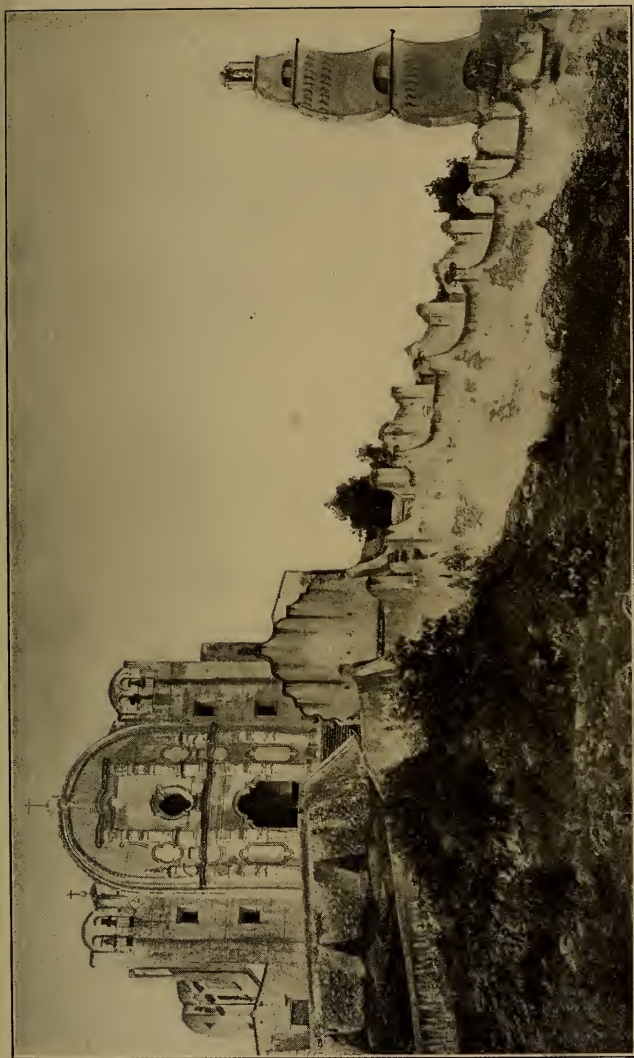
THE CHURCH OF THE SACRO
MONTE, AMECAMECA

CHAPTER VI
THE CHAPEL ON THE HILL,
GUADALUPE

THE little church on the top of the hill in the village of Guadalupe, three miles from Mexico City, is the most sacred shrine in all Mexico and one of the most famous in the world. This is the legend connected with its founding: An Indian, Juan Diego, on his way to hear mass at the Church of Santiago Tlaltelolco, nearing the hill of Guadalupe, saw an apparition of the Virgin, who bade him go to Bishop Zumarraga and order him to build a chapel in her honor on the hill. Tremblingly he listened, and when the Virgin disappeared he went to the Bishop and delivered the message. The Bishop having no faith in the Indian's story sent him away. Again the Virgin appeared to the Indian and repeated her command. The Bishop receiving the message the second time, told the Indian he must bring some proof. On his

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

return home, the Indian found his uncle ill and he was obliged to remain by his side. On the morning of December 12, 1531, Juan started out for a confessor, as the sick man was at the point of death. On the way he was again intercepted by the Virgin, who assured him that his uncle was already well and told him to gather some flowers on the barren hillside. Immediately flowers sprung up where none had ever grown before. She commanded him to take the flowers to the Bishop. Joyfully he carried them in his tilma, a sort of apron made of ixtli, a fiber of the maguey. As the Indian dropped the flowers at the Bishop's feet there appeared upon the tilma the image of the Virgin in most beautiful colors. Such evidence could not be rejected. A chapel was built where the roses had so miraculously grown from the barren soil. On February 7, 1532, the tilma with the painting upon it was placed over the altar within the shrine. In 1754 a Jesuit priest was sent to Rome and secured favorable action by the Congregation of Rites and the feast of the 12th of December was established by the papal bull of Benedict XIV. Thus the Virgin of Guadalupe was officially proclaimed



CHURCH ON THE HILL, GUADALUPE, WITH THE STONE SAILS

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the protectress and patroness of Mexico, or New Spain, and recently an attempt was made to have her declared the patroness of all America. From that time a great feast has been celebrated every year, the chief event taking place on December 12. For an entire week before that date the railroads are almost entirely occupied in bringing trainloads of excursionists to the shrine. Thousands more come on foot traveling many weary days, their backs laden with heavy packs containing pottery and vegetables which they sell to pay their expenses and for an offering to the Virgin. On December 11 every year occurs the great religious dance in honor of the Virgin, when the Indians dress themselves in their most brilliant costumes. They dance in single file, in a circle, their bodies swaying to the music of violin and flute. Before the dance begins and at intervals during the night fireworks are set off in front of the chapel. It is the fervent belief of the Indians that by this dance they please the Virgin and procure for themselves a place in heaven. Some have been known to dance until they dropped dead from exhaustion.

Juan de Zumarraga, the Archbishop to

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

whom Juan Diego showed the roses in his tilma, was a kind and humane man if somewhat credulous, who used his personal and ecclesiastical influence in defense of the native Indians. Alas, he had to do with men on whom his pleadings on behalf of the conquered race made but little impression. The Spaniards, in order to justify their cruelties, affected to believe that the Indians were not human beings at all. But Pope Paul II, in the same year the alleged apparition occurred, declared that the Indians had all the essential rights of other men, a doctrine that appears to have had little effect on the conquerors. At the end of this same year, the enemies of Zumarraga among the Spaniards averred that the whole affair had been trumped up by him as a last and desperate means of forcing his countrymen to respect the rights of the Indian race which the "Mother of God" had taken under her protection. This charge was not due to any denial of the miraculous on the part of the Spaniards, but it went against the grain to believe that such a miracle had been wrought in favor of a despised and down-trodden race. Gradually, however, as the people of mixed race formed a class which is



THE IMAGE PRINTED ON THE TILMA

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bound by ties of birth to Mexico's soil grew in numbers and influence, the Mexican Virgin grew in popularity, until her worship became not only a test of religious zeal and orthodoxy, but of patriotism. The picture of the Virgin which is alleged to be the original miraculously painted by the Virgin herself on the tilma of Juan Diego, appears on a coarse cloth, six feet long by two feet wide, protected by an immense frame and located above the altar of the Collegiate Church, which was enlarged in 1709 to meet the need of room for the great throngs of pilgrims which were increasing every year.

The ceremony of transferring the miraculous painting of the Virgin from the Cathedral of Mexico City, where it had remained for the four years previous, was perhaps the greatest ecclesiastical event in the history of the country. The church bells rang for days. All the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, the students, foreign ministers, monks, and nuns of the monastic orders formed in procession, the majority being on foot.

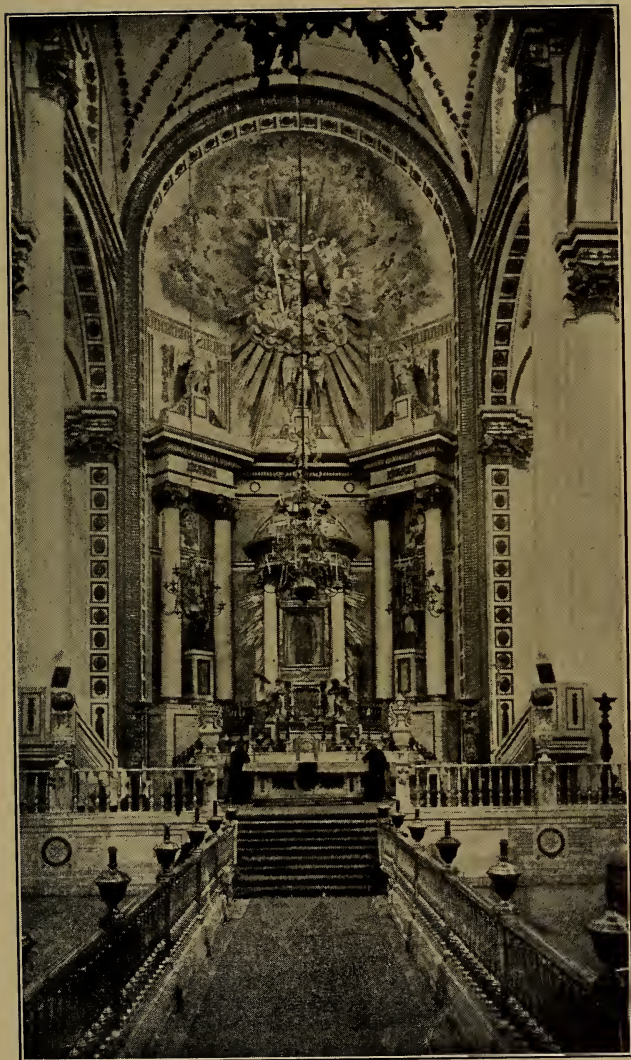
The Collegiate Church at the foot of the hill is of brick. Its length is 184 feet and its width 122 feet. Tall onyx columns, highly

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

polished, support arches of Moorish design. The high altar of marble and bronze, with the baldachin, cost over \$350,000, silver. In the tympanum is a relief, exquisitely carved, with the recumbent forms of three angels wrought in silver with wings of solid gold. There are two staircases of Carrara marble, and the newel posts of Choluca stone support silver candelabra. The statue of a former prelate, together with that of Juan Diego, kneeling in adoration before the sacred tilma, are of Carrara white marble made by Nicoli of Florence. The railing about the great altar is of solid silver. A would-be purchaser offered to replace it with a silver-plated one of the same design and pay a bonus of \$300,000, but his offer was rejected.

A conspicuous object half way up the hill at Guadalupe is the representation of two stone sails, erected by a sailor in fulfillment of a vow made during a severe storm, when his ship was threatened with disaster.

Near the church is a small chapel known as the Chapel of the Well, under whose dome is a well of mineral water believed to have gushed forth where the Virgin touched her foot on her last appearance to Juan Diego.



INTERIOR OF GUADALUPE CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Small buckets are attached to the sides of the well and are used by thousands who believe the water has not only medicinal but also miraculous healing power. Innumerable bottles of the water are carried to all parts of the country by devout pilgrims.

In former years, multitudes of people could be seen on the road from Mexico City to the sacred shrine, many of whom would crawl on hands and knees as an act of piety. When the writer came to Mexico thirty-six years ago there was only one railroad in the country—the Mexican railway—from the port of Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico. Travel was accomplished by the old-fashioned Concord coach, known in Mexico as the diligencia, or by horseback. Pilgrimages to shrines were then made almost wholly on foot. A member of one of these pilgrim parties which left the city of Querétaro one July for Guadalupe gave the following account of the trip: “The party attended mass at four in the morning, and at five started from the church on the long journey. It took nine days—the heat being intense during a part of each day, and the rain in the afternoons drenching them thoroughly. On the road the pilgrims sung

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

psalms and recited prayers on their rosaries. At night lodgings were found on farms, where their experiences were not altogether pleasant. Sometimes rats and mice ran over the bodies of those trying to sleep. Some of the pilgrims were put in corrals along with the animals, which frequently nosed them out of a bundle of hay. Provisions were scant and the supply of clothing meager, and many were exhausted when the trip was only half made."

A few years ago an important ceremony took place at Guadalupe, called "The Crowning of the Virgin." The crown, which was called the "Imperial Diadem for the Queen of Heaven," was made expressly for the occasion, and was constructed of gold and gems contributed by the ladies of Mexico, who parted with jewels prized not only for their high intrinsic value but as heirlooms. The rim at the base of the crown is of twenty-two enameled shields, representing the number of bishoprics in Mexico. A circular row of angels, represented as issuing from roses, all of massive gold, support six enameled escutcheons on which are emblazoned the arms of the six archbishoprics of Mexico. Alternate festoons of massive gold roses and diamond stars



Waite Photo.

THE CROWN OF THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

cluster at the top under an inlaid geographical globe on which is shown Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. Above the globe is the Mexican eagle grasping the globe with one talon, while with the other it holds aloft a diamond cross. At the top of the cross is a ring. The shields and escutcheons are surrounded with diamonds with rows of sapphires, emeralds, and rubies between. The crown is said to be the finest piece of work of its kind for sacred purposes in existence.

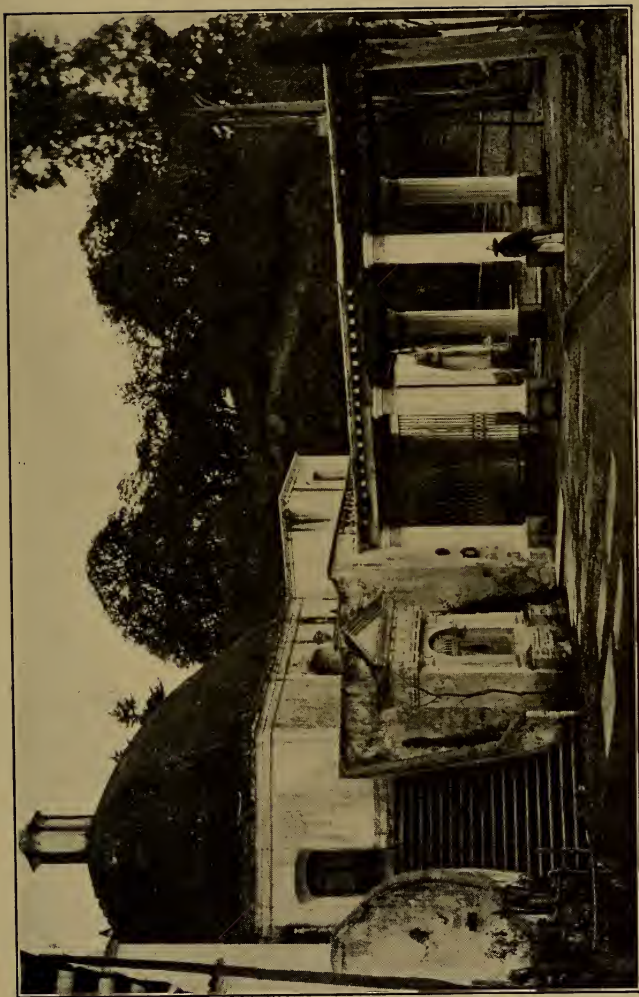
This crowning of the Virgin took place October 12, 1895, and was witnessed by one hundred thousand persons of all ranks and conditions. Two hundred delegates, prelates, and others from Rome and other countries were entertained at a banquet after the services. Some of the foreign visitors expressed regret that a procession could not pass through the streets, all religious processions being prohibited by the Laws of Reform. The government, however, issued to the church a license for a lottery which, with other sources of revenue, such as the offerings of pilgrims and others, produced an immense revenue.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

THE CHURCH OF THE SACRO MONTE, AMECAMECA

FORTY miles from the City of Mexico, at the base of the foothills of the well-known volcano Popocatepetl, lies the small town of Amecameca, and within the town a small but abruptly rising hill, in the form of a cone, known as El Sacro Monte—the Holy Mountain—on whose summit is located a church, second only in sanctity and popularity to the shrine of Guadalupe. The road leading up to the church is paved its entire length with cobblestones. Many pilgrims from far and near, coming here for relief from physical and spiritual ills, climb to the top on their knees. At regular intervals on the way are fourteen stations, each with its shrine, the first of which is dedicated to Saint Helena, the mother of Constantine. On the roots of the trees, which protrude from the earth on either side of the ascent, are hung images, tufts of hair, strings, etc., left as votive offerings by the pilgrims.

The venerated church at the top of the mount is built over a cave in which, if one is early enough, he is supposed to hear mass



SACRO MONTE CHURCH, AMECAMECA, ENTRANCE TO THE CAVE AT THE
RIGHT OF THE SHRINE

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

said in Rome. Crude images adorn the walls, while on each side of the entrance hang small paintings on wood or tin, representing various miraculous deliverances from robbery, accident, etc., obtained through prayer to El Señor del Sacro Monte. A stairway outside the church leads to rooms above the cave, each containing only a wooden bed and a chair, and with a small aperture in the wall, which is always barred during the *novenas* when occupied by women who come here to practice self-denial, by giving themselves to fasting and prayer and self-torture with disciplines.

The chief object of veneration in connection with the Church of the Sacro Monte is a life-size figure of Christ in a niche hewn out of the solid rock, made of some material so light that its weight is but a little more than two pounds. The figure is in a recumbent position, the head bandaged and the body covered with a velvet robe. Though there are many versions with respect to the figure, the legend generally accepted is that shortly after the Conquest a very holy man took up his residence in the cave upon the Sacred Mount. He longed for a suitable image of

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the Christ for his shrine. One day some merchants, transporting some images from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, appeared in the vicinity. When their pack-mules came within sight of the Sacro Monte, the mule bearing a certain representative of Christ broke loose from his driver and ran to the hills. After diligent search the lost mule was found in a cave unable to release itself. The searching party reported the matter to the archbishop, who decided that the animal should be freed but that the image should be left in the cave of the Sacro Monte where it remains to this day.

The report of the miracle, for such it was regarded, induced hundreds to come from great distances to see the image. It was whispered too that, being so light in weight, it had undoubtedly been sent directly from heaven. (It is probably made of pith.) On Ash Wednesday the figure is taken from the cave to the village church, where it remains until the following Friday, a period that marks the greatest celebration of the year in Amecameca. Many families attend with their entire households, so that the gathering assumes the aspect of a picnic. The photo-



Waite Photo.

IMAGE IN THE CAVE, SACRO MONTE

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

graph shows pilgrims assisting one of their number who is almost fainting from exhaustion on her way up the mountain, while on the ground may be seen a rebozo which some charitable bystander has thrown down to soften the stony path for the bruised and lacerated knees. Note the crown of thorns upon her head and the coppers in the dish which will add to the gift which she may present if she can reach the shrine.



PILGRIM CLIMBING ON HER KNEES, SACRO MONTE, AMECAMECA

CHAPTER VII

THE CATHEDRAL OF GUADA-
LAJARA

THE CATHEDRAL OF ZACATECAS

THE CATHEDRAL OF PUEBLA
(CITY OF ANGELS)

THE CATHEDRAL OF CUERNAVACA

THE CATHEDRAL OF MORELIA

CHAPTER VII

THE CATHEDRAL OF GUADALAJARA

THE original Cathedral of Guadalajara, like the one in Oaxaca, succeeded a primitive church thatched with straw. Most Mexican churches have a somber appearance, as only a gray dim light penetrates the lofty domes. With respect to this the Cathedral of Guadalajara is in striking contrast to the others, as a bright light suffuses the entire edifice.

The interior decorations are in white and gold. At the upper end of the nave are stained windows with a representation of Christ in the center. The choir does not occupy the center nave as in other cathedrals, but is placed at the back of the high altar, thus giving an unobstructed view of the whole interior. In the tribune above the entrance is located the magnificent organ, built in Paris and costing \$60,000, its date of consecration, as shown by an inscription on a nearby arch, being 1796.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

The greatest attraction of the church, however, is the painting of "The Assumption," by Murillo, which unfortunately is hung too high (over the doors of the sacristy) in a light too dim for close inspection. Napoleon III is said to have offered \$40,000 for the painting. At times the interest in it has been so great that the church authorities have concealed it in the walls, lest it should be stolen or carried off by force.

The great altar, thirty feet in height, is of white marble, imported from Rome and costing \$50,000. One of the blocks is said to weigh from twelve to fifteen tons, and only those who lived in Mexico before the advent of the railroad can appreciate the immense labor required to transport the material four hundred miles from the coast.

Earthquakes had impaired the original towers of the Cathedral, which have since been rebuilt. They somewhat resemble cones and are not very high. Along the ridges to the pinnacles are lines of incandescent lamps. Smaller spires, unlike anything seen elsewhere in Mexico, surround the bases of the two principal towers, in one of which there is a small bell known as "the bell of the post," which

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

used to ring to announce some important event. Another bell, called San Clemente, was rung during thunder storms to ward off lightning.

THE CATHEDRAL OF ZACATECAS

ZACATECAS is one of the most picturesque of all Mexican cities. It is over eight thousand feet above the sea, is completely surrounded by mountains, and is the center of a very rich mining district, its total product being reckoned in the billions.

What is now the Cathedral was formerly the Church of "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción," begun in 1622 and formerly dedicated in 1752. It became the Cathedral in 1862. As might be expected from so wealthy a city, the Cathedral was richly adorned, but has been greatly despoiled in later years. It is built of brown stone, elaborately carved, there being hardly an inch of the façade (see illustration) which does not show marks of the chisel, life-size statues of Christ and the Apostles being set in niches. The French artist who constructed this façade was, it is alleged, sentenced to death for some crime, but was allowed to live until he had com-

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

pleted his task. Adopting the Mexican habit known as "mañana," which freely interpreted means, "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow," he managed so to delay his work that it took twenty-one years to complete it. All the while, armed sentinels guarded his prison and escorted him to and from his work. The confinement told on his constitution, however, and at last he informed the authorities that he could not work longer and was ready to meet the sentence passed upon him so many years before. Meanwhile his achievements won him so much renown that he was granted a pardon, while banquets and other honors followed in rapid succession. The people, however, had been too dilatory in acknowledging his worth, for he died before the ship sailed that was to take him back to France.

THE CATHEDRAL OF PUEBLA, CITY OF THE ANGELS

IN the year 1529 Bishop Julian Garces arrived from Spain. After a time he desired to establish a new town near the sacred city of Cholula. One night, so the story goes, he

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

dreamed he saw two angels with a measuring line laying out a site for a city. On awaking he arose and began to search for the place he had seen so vividly in his dream. On finding it he exclaimed, "This is the place the Lord has chosen through his holy angels; to his glory here shall the city be." The city was built and is still called "Puebla de los Angeles," or Puebla for short. (Another version of the story is to the effect that it was Queen Isabella who had the dream and that she sent the bishop to find the site.)

The Puebla Cathedral was begun in 1552 but was not consecrated until 1649. It is 323 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 80 feet high, and its cost is said to have been \$1,500,000, though this amount can hardly represent the total expenditure. Indeed, there is a legend which is believed by thousands of the faithful to the effect that when the walls were going up angels every night came down from heaven and added the same amount of masonry as the workmen had laid during the previous day, thus bestowing upon the town the title, "City of the Angels."

Much of the interior of this edifice is of the famous Puebla onyx. The high altar,

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

whose builder was the noted Spanish architect, Manuel Tolsa, is of onyx and marble, the color effect being particularly pleasing—the green and white of the onyx mingling with the deeper tones of the marble. The enormous clustered columns that support the arches of the Cathedral are covered at Christmas time with immense curtains of red silk plush embroidered in gold. The great chandelier of gold and silver was seized during the religious wars by General Miramon and sold for \$40,000, with which sum he paid his troops for fighting the battles of the church against the republic.

In the sacristy are tapestries said to have been made by ladies of the Spanish Court. Others are of Flemish make, of the kind found in many of the cathedrals of Spain. Some enterprising American tourists visiting the Cathedral and the Episcopal Palace were much interested in these tapestries, and are said to have offered the bishop \$40,000 for them, a proposition which was indignantly refused.

The Chapter Room, which is upholstered in Flemish tapestry, contains a conference table which is a solid slab of onyx, and is



Waite Photo.

PUEBLA CATHEDRAL

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

further furnished with thirty-two carved Spanish chairs, presented by Charles V. The organ cases are richly carved in native woods. The doors at the entrance are very high and show some wonderful marquetry work.

As will be noted in the picture, an iron railing now surrounds the Cathedral, showing among other designs fifty-four statues of angels surmounting the pillars and arches of the gateways. These are so poised as to appear on the wing. Figures of the twelve apostles are distributed on the columns of the railing, with pilasters between bearing representations of the fathers of the church. The croziers in the hands of the apostles denote their jurisdiction. On the principal gates are *basso relievos* with representations of the founding of Puebla, the laying of the first stone of the Cathedral, and its consecration. Statues of Hope and Charity crown these gates. The railing, completed only a few years ago, is a memorial to Pope Pius IX.

Among the paintings and statues of the Cathedral is an inlaid picture of Saint Peter on the door leading to the bishop's seat, and in the shrine above is preserved a thorn from the crown of Christ. In a glass case lies a

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

most repulsive image of Christ, streaked with red paint to represent blood. The face expresses terrible suffering. The body is literally covered with silver objects as votive offerings. The inscription below reads: "Lord of the

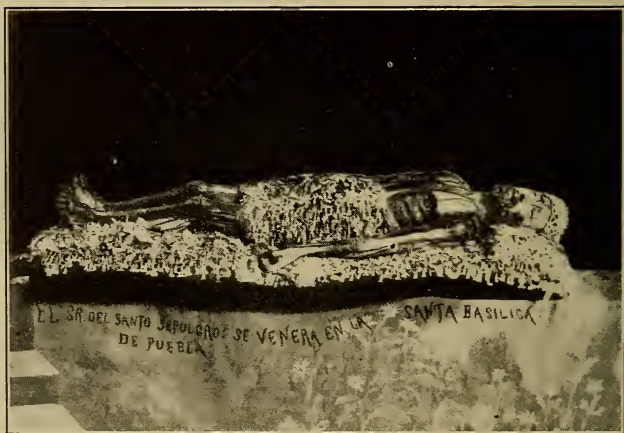


IMAGE IN PUEBLA CATHEDRAL

Holy Sepulchre, which is Venerated in the Holy Basilica of Puebla." A marble statue of Christ, life-size, stands on a pedestal just inside the main entrance. Chained images, with only the upper part of the body resting on pedestals, are represented as in the flames of purgatory.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

In addition to the Cathedral there are between forty and fifty other churches in Puebla, which is about two thirds the number existing before the Laws of Reform were enacted. Some of the Puebla churches have been reconstructed at great expense. Of the old and neglected churches one, with its numerous adjacent buildings covering a large area, was appropriated by the government for the site of a new penitentiary. Another for a time served for a freight house and machine shop for the railway company. One of the largest convent grounds, consisting of five courts, is now a Normal School for Young Women of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.

THE CATHEDRAL OF CUERNAVACA

THIS Cathedral was founded by Cortez between 1529 and 1531. The timbers are like those used in old Spanish galleons. The nave has a central line of crude sun-baked bricks. The huge doors swing on pivots. Small doors are set into the larger, as in the Oriental gates, the smaller being called "the needle's eye." The bosses in these doors with ornamental heads, suggesting Moorish art, have sharp

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

points capped with an iron piece two inches long and an inch wide at the top.

The interior, though severely plain, is not materially changed from what it was a hundred years before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth Rock, when within these walls assembled mailed warriors, cowled monks, and haughty Spanish dons.

The tower formerly contained a clock, which Charles V of Spain presented to Cortez, and which is said to have kept good time for three hundred years. It stood in a frame of wood and iron, four feet high and three feet wide. Its ponderous pendulum was weighted with twelve pounds of shot. The works were of wrought iron, which when needing recent repairs these were made by a blacksmith.

The left transept of the Cathedral contains a curious gilt coffin holding a reclining figure of Christ with the usual realistic bandages and a face expressing great agony.

The curious ceremony of "blessing the animals" occurs in the Cathedral yard every year. This is a custom based on a tradition regarding Saint Anthony, who was born in Egypt in the middle of the third century after

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Christ, and who in his youth withdrew from human society and lived in a cave in the desert. The story is to the effect that when Satan tempted Saint Anthony, the latter dared him to do his worst. Finally, Satan and a multi-



CUERNAVACA CATHEDRAL

tude of fiends fell upon him at night, fairly shaking the walls of his little cell and leaving him nearly dead on the floor. They transformed themselves into all sorts of beasts, but this did not deter the saint from leading a life of solitude and devout contemplation. Instead of cursing the real animals whose shapes

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

had tormented him, he blessed them so that they might no longer be instruments of Satan.

Passing the Cathedral on the day set apart to the honor of Saint Anthony I saw an immense crowd in the grounds. Children were there carrying cages with pet canaries. One boy had a rooster whose fighting propensity required all the boy's strength to suppress. Something like a stampede was caused when a young man came through the gates with a prancing colt which was decorated from mane to tail with flaring bows of pink tissue paper. Dogs and lambs which had been put through a dyeing process were present. A young girl carried a parrot cage in which was a very active and noisy cat, whose tail hanging through the bars was being pinched by mischievous boys. After a considerable time had elapsed a priest emerged from an adjoining chapel. He seemed to be much embarrassed. With an assistant carrying the holy water the priest rushed through the performance of sprinkling the animals. While blessing them the year previous he was gradually crowded to the edge of the stone steps, from which he fell to the pavement below, an episode that appeared to give much enjoyment to some



ENTRANCE TO CATHEDRAL CLOSE, CUERNAVACA

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

students who were watching the ceremony from the roof of the neighboring seminary.

In addition to the seminario and hospital, there are connected with the Cathedral three chapels which are situated in the extreme corners of the immense inclosure, all being surrounded by high walls. Quaint copings and crosses surround the gateways of entrances, and flying buttresses have been adjusted to the bulging walls. The beautiful Borda gardens opposite the Cathedral were the creation of Don José de la Borda, a Frenchman who came to Mexico in the beginning of the eighteenth century as an unknown poor boy. He became a miner, and in the course of a few years found himself the possessor of sixty million pesos. He spent a million and a quarter pesos upon the place till his idea of fairyland was realized.

The church which adjoins these gardens and residence was built by Borda, for in those days a church was considered an indispensable adjunct to every palatial home. It was, however, finished by his son, a priest, after his father's death, and is dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

THE CATHEDRAL OF MORELIA

SURROUNDED by mountains whose sides with the neighboring valleys are clothed with verdure the year round, and with charming little parks laid out in a most artistic way, Morelia, the capitol of the state of Michoacan, has much to impress the visitor. It has a wonderful old aqueduct with 254 arches, each 27 feet high and 18 feet wide, the cost of the construction of this having been borne by the bishop of the diocese, not merely to provide an ample supply of water for the inhabitants but to give employment to poor workingmen.

There are scores of churches in Morelia, many of them hardly more than a stone's throw apart. The Cathedral, which was finished in the seventeenth century, is one of the finest church buildings in the country, somewhat resembling the Cathedral of Mexico City.

The reliquary of the high altar is of finely chiseled gold and silver. The *sillería* of the choir is carved and gilded, the nave and the fine aisles paved with mosaic tiling. The cost,

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including the candlesticks, ornaments, and sacred vessels, is said to have been more than \$7,000,000, silver. The font of solid silver, in



THE VIA DOLOROSA, MORELIA, WHICH
PILGRIMS TRAVERSE ON THEIR KNEES

which were baptized the emperor Iturbide and the curate José Maria Morelos, one of the heroes of Mexico's independence, is greatly venerated. A depository for relics, made by

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a silversmith of Michoacan, cost \$16,000, silver. Instead of the thousands of candles used formerly for lighting the altars, the Cathedral now has two thousand electric lamps.

There is in Morelia a splendid avenue bordered on each side by fine trees with spreading branches. Some years ago this avenue was a veritable *via dolorosa* to many a devout penitent, who was expected to traverse it on his knees, to which were strapped bands of leather studded with iron spikes that penetrated the flesh with every movement, while at intervals he flogged himself on the bare back with a *disciplina* that lacerated it at every blow. The law now forbids this kind of torture, and hundreds of the *disciplinas* have been confiscated by the government. It is well known, however, that these instruments of torture are used in the convents by devotees in retreats during *novenas*, and by the Indians in remote towns. The writer's private collection contains many specimens, including a hair shirt, most of them showing marks of more or less recent usage.



CATHEDRAL, MORELIA

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH AT TAXCO,
GUERRERO

THE CHURCH OF TEPOTZOTLAN,
MEXICO

LEGEND OF THE IMAGE OF OUR
LADY OF GUANAJUATO

THE VALENCIANA CHURCH,
GUANAJUATO

THE CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO,
COYOACAN

THE CHURCH IN CUAUTLA
CHURCH AND CONVENT IN
ATLIXCO, PUEBLA

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH AT TAXCO, GUERRERO

JOSE DE LA BORDA, the patron of the Guadalupe Church at Cuernavaca, who spent his life working mines (from which he received enormous revenues) and building churches, evidently intended to make the church at Taxco, which is about fifty miles from Cuernavaca, surpass all others of its size in the country. In its elaborate carvings and richness of effect the high altar is probably not surpassed by any church in the world. If the reader will look at the picture of this altar through a magnifying glass and count the statues of Virgins, saints, angels, and cherubs, he will find upward of a hundred. The massive white columns are chiseled with the utmost delicacy, while the pulpit and the two confessionals of dark wood are richly carved. The sacristy is a marvel of beauty, its walls being covered with large canvases by Cabrera, among them a beautiful painting of the Nativity, with twelve scenes from the life of

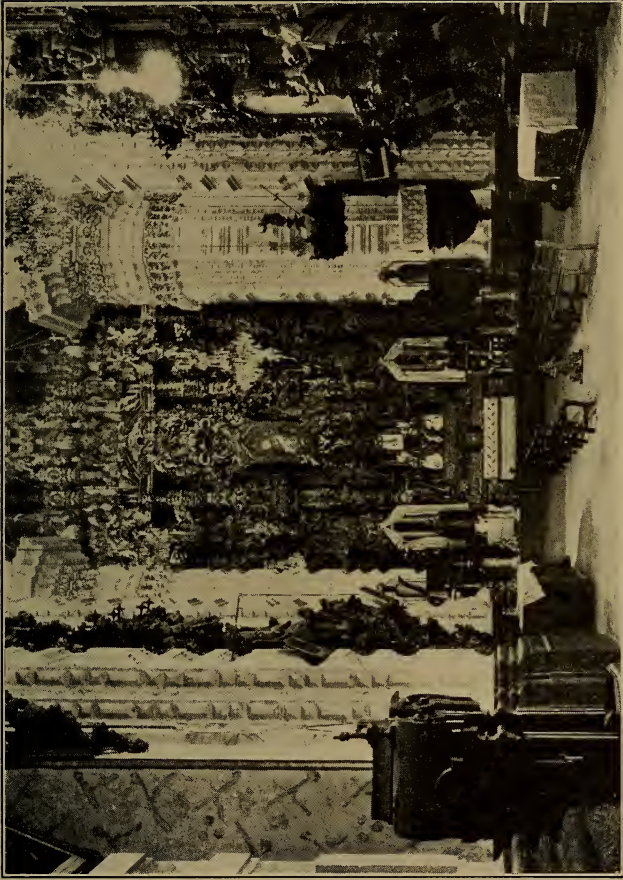
HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

Christ and the Virgin. Two large mirrors have heavy gold ornaments. The chairs and tables are peculiarly and artistically carved. The dome is covered with tile-work in various designs with an inscription of bold lettering.

Formerly the entire floor of the church was covered with a magnificent India carpet, a portion of which now serves as a rug in the sacristy. The son of de la Borda was the first priest of the Taxco church.

THE CHURCH OF TEPOTZOTLAN, MEXICO

THE first members of the Jesuit Order arrived in Mexico in September, 1572. They lived in Mexico City until the arrival of Dr. Juan de la Plaza, a prominent member of the Order, who came from Peru in 1580 ostensibly to inspect the houses and work of the order. He was evidently not quite satisfied with the progress made, for he decided the members must move to districts where, by learning the principal languages and dialects of the Indians, they could more effectively perform their work. He sent some priests to Huisquilucan, between Mexico City and Toluca, where they met with considerable success and



Waite Photo.

RICHLY DECORATED INTERIOR OF TAXCO CHURCH

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were able to extend their work to neighboring villages.

Later it was suggested to the Jesuit author-



VALENCIANA CHURCH, GUANAJUATO

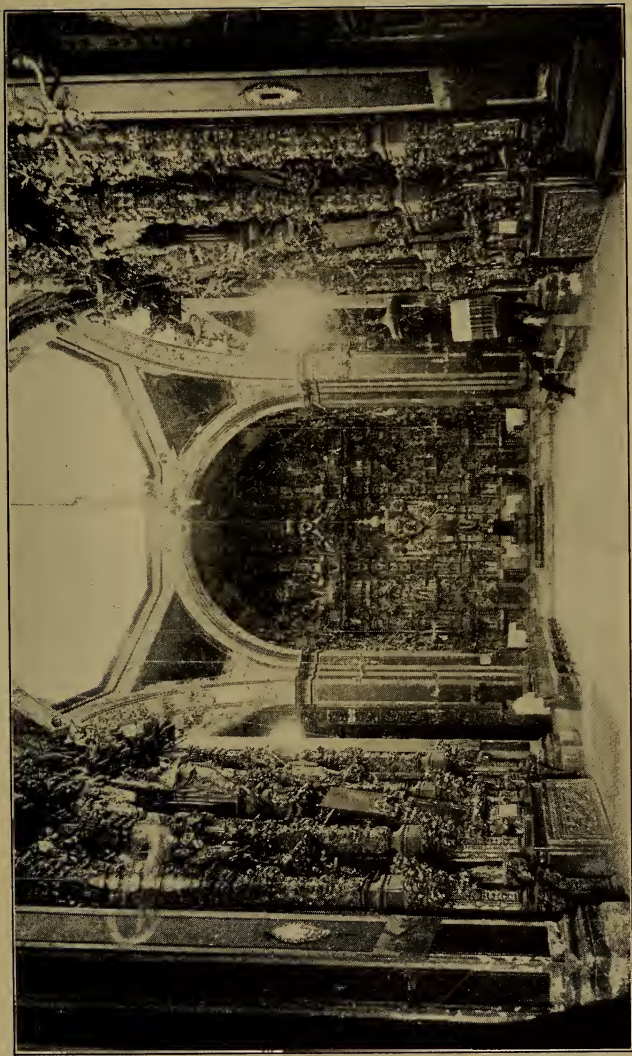
ities that another town, Tepetzotlan, near Cautitlan, might prove an advantageous center for work among the Otomís, and a

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

priest with an assistant was sent. In 1584 a school was established for Indian children. Two years later the novitiate where the candidates for the Order pursued their preliminary studies was transferred from Mexico City to Tepetzotlan. Indeed, the place continued to be a center of great Jesuit activity until the Order was expelled from the country by the government in 1873.

Some years after their expulsion, the Order having been permitted to return, the property at Tepetzotlan came again into their hands. In August, 1908, in honor of the American ambassador, the authorities of the Tepetzotlan Church arranged for an inspection of the reconstructed edifice. The visitors were amazed to find in an out of the way place a church which with its decorations and art treasures represents a value of several millions, each altar being valued at a million.

The church at Tepetzotlan is itself sufficient evidence of the zeal for religion of the conquistadores, and particularly of the priests who accompanied the army, as well as of their successors, who demonstrated their faith by building churches in all parts of the country, often at great personal sacrifice. The illus-



Waite Photo.

TEPOTZOTLAN CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

tration shows three of the altars with their elaborate ornamentation.

LEGEND OF THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF GUANAJUATO

IN a chapel near the San Francisco Church of Guanajuato whose doors are open only for short periods at six o'clock in the morning and at five in the afternoon, is an image of the Virgin which is believed to have existed in Santa Fé, Granada, in the seventh century. The story relates that when the Moors invaded Spain in 714 the figure was hidden in a cave by the devout people of Granada to save it from the infidels, and that it remained thus for eight centuries. Though of wood it was preserved from decay by its own miraculous power. In 1557 the mines of Guanajuato were sending to Philip II vast royalties, and, in order to show his appreciation, the King presented this image of the Virgin. For many years it had been recognized as the patron saint of the city of Guanajuato, but in November, 1907, it was officially so declared by papal authority. The coronation took place May 31, 1908. The crown, which

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weighs above four pounds, is of gold studded with gems. The figure itself is not particularly attractive. The face is small in proportion to the body and has a sallow aspect. Its wardrobe was so splendid and extensive that a vestry for its accommodation was set apart in the San Franciscan Church. In times of drought and epidemics the image is still carried to a shrine on the main street of Guanajuato, where it is believed it will work the needed miracle.

THE VALENCIANA CHURCH, GUANAJUATO

THE Valenciana mining district, where this church is located, is forty miles from the city of Guanajuato, and contains deposits of gold and silver among the richest in the country, the total output having been upward of \$800,000,000, silver. In fact, silver was so plentiful in the early days that much of the ore, it is said, was built into the foundations of the church, and Count de Rul, who was one of the chief owners of the mining rights of this section, is declared to have sent to Spain enough of his uncounted supply of



OUR LADY OF GUANAJUATO

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

bullion to purchase the rarest wines with which to mix the mortar for the walls of the church. So lavish was this rich miner that he provided purple and scarlet bags of the rich material for removing the excavations. The peones who worked the mines do not appear to have shared in this wealth, however, as their wage was but six cents a day, and on the religious festivals, which were numerous, these poor people gave their services to the building of the church.

The edifice, which is cruciform in shape and has but one tower, was dedicated on August 7, 1788, and is still in a good state of preservation. The interior is elaborately carved, with delicate relief ornamentation of the piers and arches. Its cost is said to be 1,000,000 pesos. The high altar in the center and the two others located one at each end of the transept, have a reredos that occupies the full height of the chancel and transept, and cost 240,000 pesos. For a time each of the thousand miners at La Valenciana gave every week to the church the value of a piece of ore called "la piedra de mano" (meaning a stone the size of a man's hand), which totaled an annual revenue of 50,000 pesos and per-

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mitted a service of great pomp to be maintained. But the once flourishing community has now but few inhabitants, and but one resident priest.

THE CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO, COYOACAN

ON the bank of the quiet Magdalena River at Coyoacan, about six miles from Mexico City, is a chapel dedicated to San Antonio, whose image is guarded behind a grill screen that is kept securely closed all day. Its architecture indicates the time of the viceroys, when the chapel was filled with devout worshipers, most of whom came from the adjoining villages of Coyoacan and San Angel.

The church is now the property of a lady living in Coyoacan. The Indians passing along the highway with their vegetable crates on their backs, approach the chapel reverently, often with hats in hand. Through the bars they pass humble offerings—perhaps a carrot, an onion, or a bunch of lettuce. Into a box for alms falls a penny or other small coin. After making the sign of the cross, they pass on their way apparently with peaceful

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

minds and satisfied hearts. Every evening at dusk the owner of the little church, dressed in deep mourning, comes to this solitary church, opens the screen, gathers the pennies, coins, and vegetables, which amount to two or three pesos, and retiring, locks the outside door. Early every morning she returns, opens the door, and places the padlock on the grill screen. At the end of the year she gives a religious feast from the income she realizes by her daily visits. To this feast she invites all the Indians for a radius of fifteen miles around this solitary hermitage, where during the summer months it nestles in luxuriant vegetation.

There are many churches dedicated to San Antonio and many shrines where he is venerated. The majority of his devotees are women. If unmarried, they invariably ask for a lover or a husband. And it is the general belief that the prayers are answered. At Panzacola, San Antonio is recognized principally as the patron saint of the harvest. He is believed to bring rain, to quicken the seed, and ripen the corn. His birthday is celebrated in a religious-worldly manner. A mass is chanted and a "rosary" recited in the

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

chapel, while the rest of the day is given up to the old-time Indian dances. In all the towns and ranches of that region there is eating and drinking and boisterous hilarity. Though the saint has such divine powers, he does not keep away the thieves. A woman who lives near the church says the bells were taken away from the towers, and sometimes robbers insert long rods with hooks through the bars of the screen and pull out the vegetables which have been left by the devout Indians.

THE CHURCH IN CUAUTLA

ON the high table-lands of Mexico it is always cold during the months of December and January, and no words can quite represent the sensation which one experiences who leaves the capital (whose altitude is nearly eight thousand feet), clad in heavy wraps, and in the space of four hours finds himself four thousand feet nearer the sea level, breathing the balmy air of the semitropics and looking out on innumerable fields of luxuriant vegetation. Such an experience is for everyone who leaves Mexico City in the winter to visit the small town of Cuautla.



RAILWAY STATION, CUAUTLA, FORMERLY A CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

The church seen in the engraving is now the Cuautla station of the Interoceanic Railroad. As such it is unique, and possibly the oldest edifice used as a station in the world. In the baggage room formerly stood the high altar, and under the dome is a bare arch where one can still read the inscription in Latin: "How dreadful is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The building was the offering of the wealthy Doña Calderon. It was confiscated with other church property by the government in 1859. When the Franciscan friars left it they stripped it of all its paintings and ornaments.

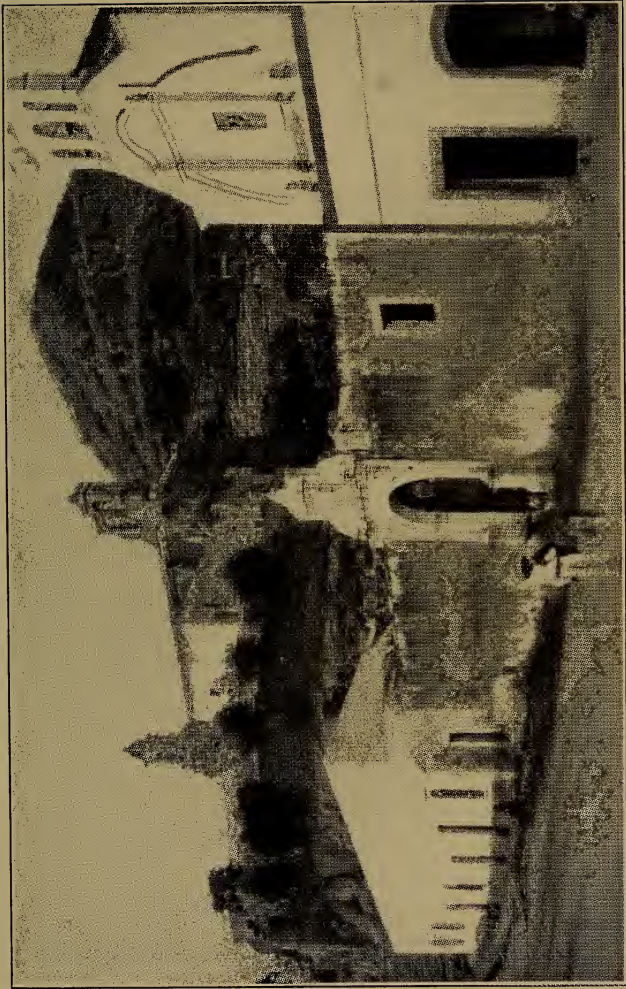
CHURCH AND CONVENT IN ATLIXCO, PUEBLA

IN former years this little Indian town in the state of Puebla had five churches almost within a stone's throw of each other. Now churches and convents are in a dilapidated state, though still interesting in what they reveal of ancient customs and present-day conditions. A recent visitor to the convent asked to see certain rooms and was informed

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

that they were occupied by the priest of the adjoining parish and his family, consisting of two sons and two daughters. One of the daughters politely offered to act as escort. Some of the rooms contain discarded images. Off the corridor below are rooms which, when the doors are closed, have neither light nor air. A small aperture in the wall of one room was formerly used for passing food through to a refractory nun. The windows are heavily barred.

In another convent of the village the Mother Superior speaks to the visitors through a small opening in the wall at the right of the entrance. On the occasion of my visit she wore a garment of coarse brown serge with a long rosary and a heavy silver cross suspended from her neck. A white band on her forehead and a veil did not completely hide her pleasant features. After passing the compliments of the day I expressed a desire to purchase some *disciplinas*—instruments of self-flagellation used throughout Mexico. She replied that she thought there were none on hand but that she could order some. However, she found a rope *disciplina* with five braided thongs, which she said was the only



CHURCH AND CONVENT AT FOOT OF PYRAMID, ATLIXCO

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

one for sale. She then left the room but soon returned with an iron scourge with spikes in it. I remarked, "That is what I want," to which she replied, "It is not for sale, as it is in use in the convent." When I informed her that I was visiting in Atlixco and would be leaving soon she went out again and on her return she was accompanied by a young nun also veiled. She then told me I could have the *disciplina*. I asked her how often these instruments were used, to which she replied, "The rope one is used once a day during the months of December and January, twice a day the rest of the year." The iron *disciplina*, she said, was used "according to the dictates of the father confessor." It may be said here that in using the iron *disciplina* the back of the victim is stripped and is whipped alternately over each shoulder, until not merely blood is drawn but the flesh lacerated.

Before my departure the Mother Superior directed a servant to show me the private chapel where hangs a large figure of Christ on the cross, to which sanctuary the nuns are accustomed to go at various hours after midnight and pray. At this particular time there were fifteen young women in the convent.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH OF OCOTLAN,
TLAXCALA

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAN
MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

THE CHURCH OF EL ROBLE,
MONTEREY

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH OF OCOTLAN, TLAXCALA

IT has been customary in Mexico to erect a church on the site of every apparition of the Virgin. As the story goes, she appeared near Ocotlan when there was an epidemic of smallpox and a great scarcity of water. Where a marvelous spring gushed forth a building was erected.

An Indian sculptor, Francisco Miguel, spent twenty-five years in executing an interior which resembles a grotto. Vast sums of money were lavished upon the embellishment of the church and of the *camarin* (where images are dressed), the latter a marvel of artistic beauty. In 1852 the interior was partially modernized by Señora Zabalda. The floor of the chapel is covered with thick tapestry of quaint and beautiful design. The altar is of silver and has a figure of solid gold in the shrine. The crown of the Virgin is of

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

wrought gold, set with emeralds, rubies, and diamonds.

The ceremony of her coronation in June, 1907, was authorized by a special papal bull. There were present the apostolic delegate, an archbishop and bishops from three other sees and an immense outpouring of people. The Virgin of Ocotlan is the idol of the Indians of Tlaxcala, much as the Virgin of Guadalupe is of the common people of the entire country. Indeed, the legends of the appearing of the two Virgins have much in common.

The authorized version of the Legend of this Virgin is contained in *A History of Our Lady of Ocotlan*, published in Puebla in 1907, and dedicated to the first archbishop of the diocese. This relates how a servant of God, Juan Diego, was unable to find medicine with which to cure his parents, victims of the terrible scourge of smallpox. Frequently crossing the Zaquapan River, it occurred to him to fill his pitcher with that water, to which is attributed a curative power. Going up a hill called San Lorenzo, absorbed in the thought of his sick parents, a most beautiful woman presented herself and said: "God save you, my son, where goest thou?" He answered, "I

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

go, my lady, to my town and am taking water of the Zaquapan to cure my sick ones who die without remedy." "Come," the woman said, "follow me, and I will give you of another water that will not only cure your parents, but all who drink of it; for my heart, always inclined to help the suffering, cannot endure to see so many misfortunes without remedying them." The Indian followed his guide until they arrived at a small plain, covered with pine trees, and she showed him a spring of pure water. "Take all of this water you want," she said, "and all who take it will be free from sickness. Also tell the fathers of the Convent of San Francisco that in one of the trees they will find my image, and that I wish it put in the high altar of the Chapel of San Lorenzo." At sunset the same day Juan Diego started on his customary journey. The fathers and some people from the village followed him without his knowledge. To their surprise, they saw the pines burning without being consumed; among them was one, the largest, which burned more than the others. In this tree was the image of "the Holy Queen." To this fire was added the sound of sweet music, and it was then that Juan listened

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

to the Queen of Heaven and spoke to her again, receiving directions concerning the place where she should be worshiped.

The following day a committee from the town, presided over by the Indian, arrived at the place. Juan Diego struck the tree with his ax; the bark fell and they saw the image of the "Queen of Glory." All knelt and adored her and took her away from the tree, and in compliance with her expressed wish conducted her to the chapel of the glorious martyr, San Lorenzo, to be known henceforth as "The Sanctuary of the Holy Lady."

The image was left in the place formerly occupied by San Lorenzo, but the fathers did not take into account that the sexton was a devout servant of the martyr. When he closed the chapel that night the sexton took the image of the Virgin and placed it on one side of the high altar, and restored San Lorenzo to his accustomed place. But the next day the sexton saw that the images were as the fathers had placed them, and he again changed them and took the figure of the Virgin to his home; but on waking up the next morning he could not find it, and, going to the church, he saw it in the place of San Lorenzo. Then, in tears,

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

he went to the fathers and begged their pardon.

Formerly the image was called "The Virgin of Ocotlatia," or "The Lady of the Burning Pines," but now she is known as "The Lady of Ocotlan."

In what esteem the Virgin of Ocotlan is held by not merely the uneducated natives but also the rich and cultured is shown by the following testimonial published as late as 1907. (The translation is almost literal.)

"Señora M. de Z——, on a certain occasion, had a coachman, sick with a contagious disease. Mrs. Z——, out of charity, cared for the sick man, believing that with caution she would not take the disease. However, she came down with it in its worst form. The most noted physicians were called to attend her, but all were of the opinion that there was no remedy. Therefore, Mrs. Z—— invoked 'Our Lady of Ocotlan,' and, in a few days, was completely restored to health. In recognition of this great favor, Mrs. Z—— donated \$2,000 (silver) for a dress and mantle for the image of 'Our Lady of Ocotlan,' and ordered it made in Paris. It is sea-blue velvet with a fine border of gold. Mrs. Z—— ex-

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

pected to be present at the ceremony of dressing the image, but was stricken with a pulmonary disease. The doctors said there was no hope for her. But as the sick woman very much desired to see the Virgin in her new dress, she consulted the doctors to know if she could live for the forty-eight hours required to go from Mexico City to Ocotlan in her carriage. Although the physicians would not assure her that her life would be spared that long the sick woman made the attempt, accompanied by a priest, a doctor, and some members of her family. After a long and painful journey she arrived at the sanctuary. She was immediately taken to the *camerin*, the place behind the altar where images are dressed. The most Holy Virgin was then brought down to have the new dress put upon her. While Mrs. Z—— watched the proceedings, she was full of gratitude for having her life prolonged to see her desire fulfilled, and said: 'Now, my Lady, thou hast given me the privilege to see that which I have so longed for, and now thou canst dispose of thy servant.' But, to the surprise of all, the sick one began to rally and in a short time was entirely recovered.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

“In testimony of her gratitude she renovated the sanctuary, erected beautiful altars, masterpieces of art, in which work she expended thousands of dollars, guided by her son, who is now an archbishop of the church. She built a house near by, where she spent the remainder of her days in praise to the benevolent Mother for interceding in her behalf. At her death the son donated the house as a school for poor girls.”

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, GUANAJUATO

THE town of San Miguel de Allende, which was named for the faithful general of the patriot priest Hidalgo, is in the state of Guanajuato, two hundred and seventeen miles from Mexico City. In 1880 the archbishop of the diocese gave this parish permission to build a church to take the place of the cylindrical structure which had been erected in the eighteenth century. The parish priest engaged as the designer and builder of the proposed new church Zeferino Gutierrez,

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

a local genius, who had never been out of the village of his birth. It is stated that he could not read or write, and up to the time he was engaged for this work he had never seen a Gothic building. Each day he drew his plans for that day's work in the sand with a stick. His death in 1884 left the church unfinished, but enough was done to demonstrate the extraordinary talents of its designer and builder.

THE CHURCH OF EL ROBLE, MONTEREY

THIS massive structure was begun in 1792 and consecrated in July, 1833. During the American War (1845-48) it was used as a powder magazine, its walls and towers as late as 1904 showing the marks made by the bullets of the invaders.

The legend circulated by the natives in regard to this building is to the effect that a monk many years ago was in the habit of spending many hours in private devotion under the branches of a large oak. One morning the image of the Virgin, which is now in the Church of El Roble (The Oak), and which is nearly as black as a similar one



CHURCH OF SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

at Monserrat, Spain, was observed in the heart of the tree. The news spread rapidly, and so great was the enthusiasm of the people that they erected a chapel called "El Roble" and enshrined the image therein. The Virgin



RUINS OF EL ROBLE CHURCH

suffered herself to remain in this new home during the day, but at night, though the door was securely fastened, she managed to get out and returned to her abode in the tree. But the tree was one day shivered by lightning and the image therefore was compelled to remain in the chapel. When the Cathedral was finished the bishop appointed a day for

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the image to be transferred to a special place prepared for it in the new building, which was done with much enthusiasm. However, the next morning after the transfer was made the sacred image was found to be missing from its new home. Going to the chapel of El Roble, the figure of the Virgin was found occupying its old place, its garments showing the dust of travel. It was decided that it would be useless to try to make the image stay at the Cathedral, as neither bolts nor locks were proof against it, and it was given over formally to the little Church of the Oak.

The following quotation from a daily paper, published as late as 1905, indicates how general is the belief in and respect for these old legends:

“With the collapse of the dome of the Roble Church of Monterey one of the most magnificent structures in northern Mexico was reduced to ruins. Without warning the crash came on the night of October 24, completely demolishing the entire church. . . . One of the most miraculous incidents connected with the destruction of the Roble Church was the preservation of the Virgin del Roble. This image, the tutelary saint of the basilica, had



Waite Photo.

VIRGIN OF THE ROSARY IN SANTO DOMINGO
DE GUZMAN CHURCH, QUERÉTARO, ONE
OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND
RICHLY ADORNED OF THE
MODERN MADONNAS

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

occupied a central position upon a high throne of bronze over the altar, and, though the walls of the basilica were entirely annihilated, the image was unharmed. It fell to the stone floor from a height of nearly seven meters, the bronze altar which fell with it being irreparably demolished. Two huge blocks of stone, weighing several hundred pounds each, fell directly upon the image, but at such an angle that they protected it from the mass of stone and débris which afterward covered the sacred relic with a pyramid of mortar and stone. Everything else was broken into unrecognizable fragments. But when the Virgin was taken out it was discovered that she had not received the least injury. Indeed, the robes of the Virgin were hardly flecked with the dust from the pulverized mortar which covered everything else. This wonderful phenomenon is considered a divine intervention, and is so explained by the curate in charge. There is no reason to doubt the justice of this claim, as many persons of unquestionable integrity have been to see the Virgin, and they testify that she is the identical Virgin del Roble. No explanation other than this is plausible."

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCHES OF QUERÉTARO

THE CHURCH OF SANTA ROSA

THE SANTA CLARA CHURCH AND CONVENT

THE SANTA CRUZ CHURCH, QUERÉTARO

CHAPTER X

CHURCHES OF QUERÉTARO

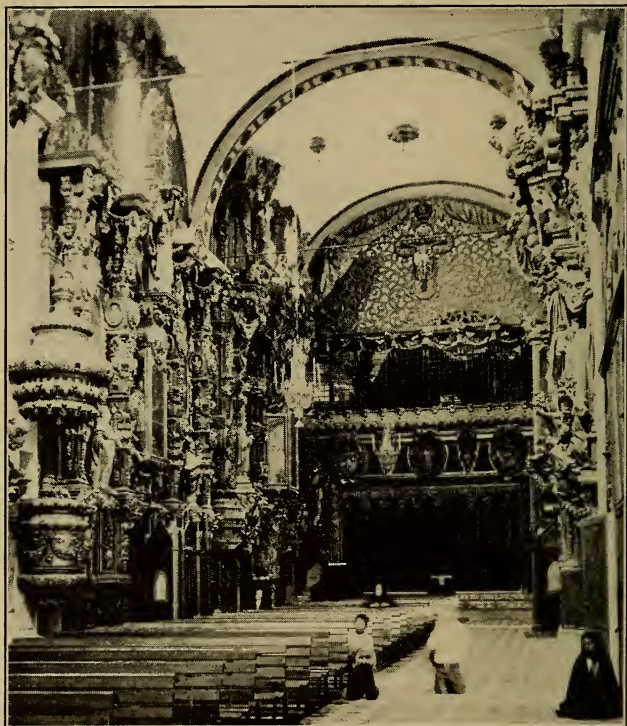
THE CHURCH OF SANTA ROSA

NO description can do justice to this wonderful church. Its foundation was laid in the seventeenth century, its interior reconstructed near the close of the eighteenth century by Edward Tresquerras, poet, painter, sculptor, and engraver, who was born at Celaya, west of Querétaro, in the year 1765.

The approach to the church is commanding. From the street one ascends steps leading to a wide stone pavement extending the full length of the building. The two flying buttresses of stone, with their grotesque gargoyles, extend out over this pavement at the corner where rises a tower of Oriental design which, with the dome, are as Tresquerras left them. It is generally believed that the enormous expense of the tower, dome, and cloisters was all realized by the sale of merchandise seized from smugglers who infested the gulf coast.

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

The eye takes in at a glance the magnificent view of the small interior. The altars and



SANTA CLARA CHURCH, QUERÉTARO

reredos are a mass of gilt ornaments, and there are many huge sculptured figures, fine paintings, rich wood carvings, and grilled bal-

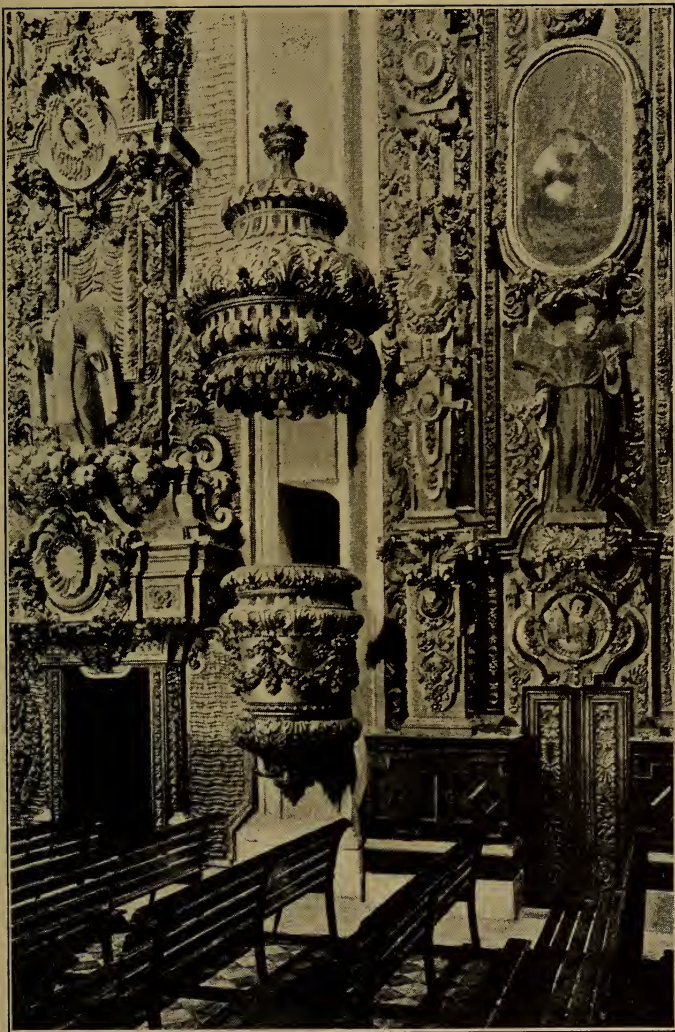
HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

conies. In former years the Mother Superior and the nuns occupied these screened balconies, where they could listen unobserved. A large crucifix on the wall opposite the entrance is also the work of Tresquerras. Its carving is probably unsurpassed by the work of any modern artist in Mexico. On the wall at the right of the entrance are six oval paintings representing scenes in the life of the Virgin, each painting being garlanded with a wreath made of green lacquer alternating with gold, resembling the laurel wreath bestowed on the victor in a Roman contest. On the left of the entrance is a large painting of Saint Nicholas of Bari, the patron saint of Russia, who, on the death of his uncle, the archbishop, was appointed his successor. He showed himself the special protector of the innocent and wronged, and is pictured standing by the side of a tub in which a man had concealed the bodies of three children whom he had murdered, but who had been restored to life by the saint. According to the traditional account, the body of Saint Nicholas, who died in the year 342, was transferred in 1087 to Bari, Italy. During all these years "the manna of Saint Nicholas

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

still flows from his bones and heals all kinds of infirmities." In the center of the left wall are paintings in green lacquer wreaths, in which are depicted the four scenes of the appearance of the Virgin to Juan Diego at Guadalupe. The side altars, which are surmounted by statues of angels and saints done in gold leaf, have been pronounced by Frederick Church, the well-known American artist and connoisseur, as unique in their beauty. The choir screen is superb. Back of the wrought-iron grill-work on the ground floor is the great organ, and above this grill-work are paintings of saints enclosed in the lacquer wreaths. Above the paintings is a screen of fanciful design, and above that, completely filling the arch, an exquisite piece of wrought-iron work with the figure of Santa Rosa in the center under a canopy having the form of a corrugated shell.

At the head of the sacristy, covering the entire wall, is a mural decoration called "The Closed Garden," for which Tresquerras received \$15,000 (silver). The painting has a grayish-blue tone, its figures being exceedingly graceful and lifelike. The scene is allegorical, representing nuns and their pupils



ELABORATELY CARVED PULPIT AND COLUMNS
OF SANTA CLARA CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

in a convent garden in the midst of fruits and flowers. In the center of the picture Christ is shown hanging from the branch of a tree. At his feet are lambs holding in their mouths white roses (a symbol of Santa Rosa) which are to be turned red by the blood of his wounds. At the left stands an angel offering a vase of roses and lilies, on the former of which there flows from the Saviour's side water, on the latter, blood.

Upon the high altar, with upturned face and clasped hands, is the image of Santa Rosa, in whose honor the church is named. She was born in Lima in 1586, and was the first canonized saint of the New World. She was christened Isabel but called Rose for the beauty of her infant face. When in the cradle her silence under a painful surgical operation early proved that courage and patience under suffering which later developed into a consuming zeal. At an early age she worked night and day to support her parents, who had lost their fortune. In spite of hardships and austerities her beauty ripened with increasing age, and she was greatly admired. For fear of becoming vain she cut off her beautiful hair and blistered her face with pepper and

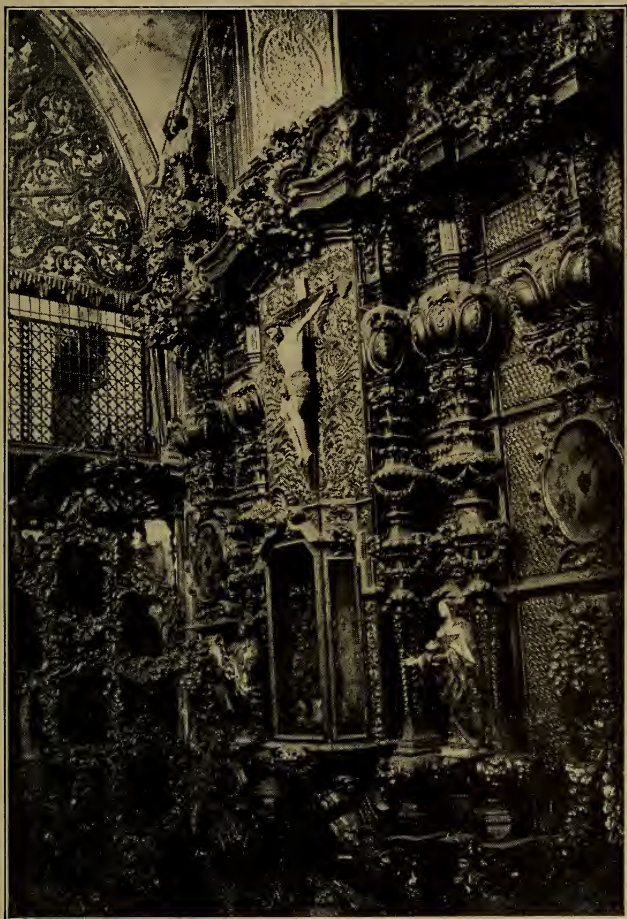
HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

her hands with lime. She redoubled her penance. Her cell was a garden hut, her couch a box of broken tiles. Under her habit she wore a hair shirt studded with iron nails. Concealed by her veil she wore a silver crown armed with ninety iron points. More than once, when she shuddered at the prospect of a night of torture, she seemed to hear a voice saying, "My cross was yet more painful." All her sufferings were borne for the conversion of sinners. The thought of the multitudes in hell was always in her mind and upon her soul. She died at the early age of thirty-one.

THE SANTA CLARA CHURCH AND CONVENT

THIS church is peculiar in construction, comprising what is in reality two buildings in one, each having its own separate entrance. One of these entrances, now closed, opened into the chapel used formerly by the nuns of the Santa Clara convent. The other door leads into the main church, whose long nave is divided from the chapel by a screen of wrought-iron grill-work.

The central one of the three altars on one side of the church is devoted to "The Sacred



Waite Photo.

RICH CARVING IN SANTA ROSA CHURCH,
QUERÉTARO

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Heart of Jesus," represented by a heart of immense size with a gilt nimbus having a gilded ornamental canopy overhead shaped like a shell. Similar designs flank the central figure. In the center of this altar stands a life-size and very white image of Christ with a skirt about the loins. It is called "The Christ of the Column." The image represents the Lord chained to a white post or short column. A long, dark wig falls over the shoulders and the back shows the flaying by scourges. It is most gruesome and is distinctly out of place in the midst of such rich and elegant ornamentation. Embedded in a mass of free carved wood tracings is an image of the Virgin, La Purísima, in white and blue robes, with garlands of roses at her feet.

The sides of the central altar are of open work, the projecting leaves and flowers being carved wood. The passion flower in carved wood adorns one side. A fringe of green lacquer depends from the cornices. The opposite altar and the pulpit have festoons of carved wood in flowers, foliage, and fruit, with gilt images resting on either side of the altar which hold huge cornucopias filled with harvest reapings, all in gilt ornamentation.

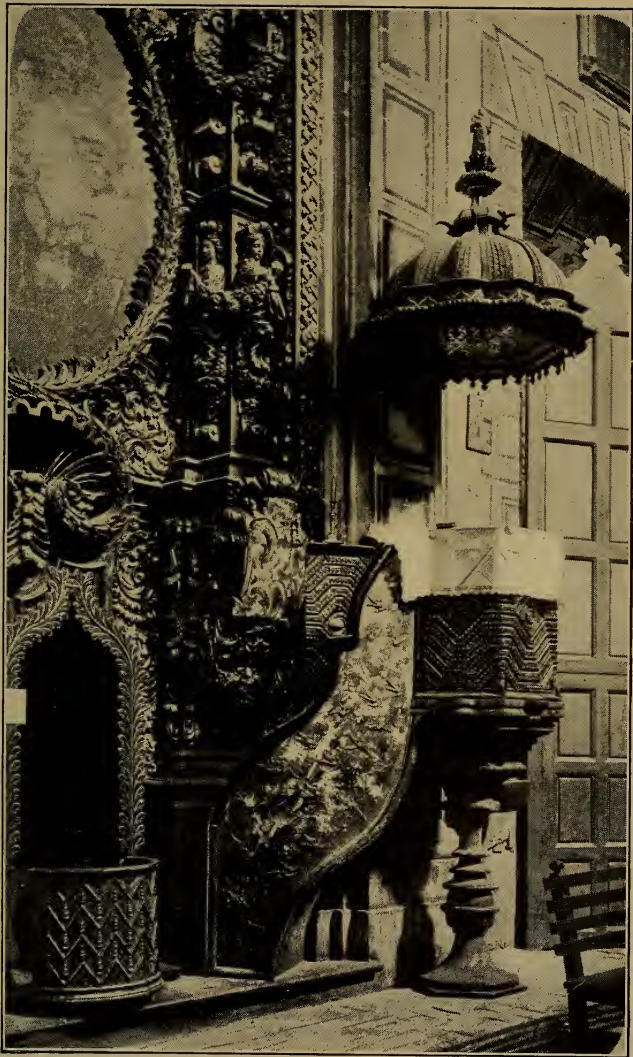
HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

The dome contains eight square windows, with old-fashioned small panes of glass. The depth between the window casing and the outer edge of the wall is three feet, showing the thickness of the masonry, and this space is lined with gold-leaf throughout.

The chapel has a large painting of The Last Supper, showing nuns in the foreground with their faces upturned in adoration. This painting was dedicated to the convent of Santa Clara by the artist in the year 1783.

Every church of importance had a convent adjoining it, which in former years often played a more conspicuous part than the church itself. Generally only the daughters of rich families were admitted as nuns who brought with them a dowry of at least a thousand pesos as a wedding present, for they were henceforth to be regarded as the brides of Christ. Some young women gave as much as five thousand pesos, and we read of one who presented an entire block of real estate as her dowry. The Santa Clara Convent at one time housed eight thousand nuns.

In a side street is a chapel once a part of the convent, with one dome, now used as a carpenter shop, of which the entire floor and



Waite Photo.

PULPIT SANTA ROSA CHURCH, QUERÉTARO

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the altar platform is laid in tiles. This was the nuns' private chapel.

The convent of Santa Clara is famous for its part in the Revolution of 1859-1861.

THE SANTA CRUZ CHURCH, QUERÉTARO

NEARLY four centuries ago when the people of Querétaro were pure Indians and still adhered to the religion of their ancestors, the chiefs of Tapeji and Tula, with a large following of their Spanish allies, set out to conquer and baptize them in accordance with the rites of the Catholic Church. When near Querétaro they sent ahead with proposals of peace an emissary whom the people of Querétaro did not receive very kindly, as they naturally did not wish to surrender to a stranger their lands and homes, to say nothing of their faith, without a struggle. As the Spanish were mail-clad, the Indians reasoned wisely that it would be foolish for them to attack them with bows and arrows. They accordingly returned answer that they were ready to fight and proposed fists as the only weapons to be used by both sides. The novel proposition was accepted, and on July 25,

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1531, early in the morning the battle began. All day long the fight continued. How much longer it might have lasted no one can tell, had not the appearance in the heavens of an angel with a fiery cross put a stop to the



CHURCH OF LA CRUZ, QUERÉTARO

struggle. Such, at least, is the story believed by the faithful.

The Spaniards claimed the victory, but, according to the account, the vanquished, in the characteristic manner of their race, spent the night in merry-making, with no sign of discouragement or rebellion. They professed to recognize his Majesty, Charles V, as their

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

ruler. They were baptized, the conflict which preceded being celebrated afterward as "The Battle of Baptism." There was then erected a large gray stone cross from which the church takes its name. The cross now stands in the church at the rear of the high altar in a glass case.

In Maximilian's day there was an immense painting, extending across the wall of the church, for which the artist was offered \$25,000 (silver), but which he refused. This painting afterward mysteriously disappeared.

It is of historical interest to know that Maximilian, when in Querétaro in 1867, had his headquarters in this church, the old convent adjoining being used by his besieged troops as barracks. During an unexpected assault on the city by General Escobedo, Maximilian was urged to flee. He made his escape to the so-called "Hill of the Bells," near the city, from which a white flag was soon afterward displayed and Maximilian delivered over his sword to the Republican officer. For a few days during the progress of his trial, Maximilian was confined in the convent of the Capuchinas in the heart of the city.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHURCHES OF VERA CRUZ

THE CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH

THE CHURCH OF SAN AGUSTIN

THE CHURCH OF THE BLACK CHRIST

CHAPTER XI

CHURCHES OF VERA CRUZ

THE CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO

THE San Francisco Church of Vera Cruz was founded by the early conquerors in 1568. For a long time it was supported mainly by a special tax imposed upon all ships entering that port. In common with all other churches it was confiscated in 1859, and later devoted to secular use. The tower is now a lighthouse and bears the name of Benito Juarez, Mexico's "little Indian" President. The main part of the edifice houses a public library of great value and a small but interesting museum.

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH

THIS church was dedicated in 1734 to the Virgin of the Assumption. It is very plain and not too clean. There are numerous grotesque figures in chalk and wood which quite fill the interior. Figured cherubim,

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saints, and patriarchs are standing, others are shouldering crosses, and still others are stretched in coffins—all denoting agony. The sight is really repulsive. The figure of the Virgin on the high altar is under a peculiar canopy. The baldachin consists of pointed arches constructed of wood.

In a side room is an altar of carved wood, resembling a ponderous mantelpiece. The reredos reaches to the high ceiling. The lower shelf is for the books and communion service for masses.

The towers and the lantern surrounding the cupola, and even the cross, form a roosting place for buzzards, which were called by the Aztecs "the sacred birds of mystery." These congregate in hundreds by nightfall, causing considerable noise by their wrangling for sleeping places, seeming to prefer the church to private dwellings. When morning dawns on the black and motionless mass of birds the roof resembles a hearse covered with black plumes. These unattractive creatures spend the daytime near restaurants, or perched upon the ambulating garbage carts. Though their habits are very offensive the authorities will not allow them to be killed,

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a fine of five pesos being imposed upon whoever injures them, because the buzzards constitute the scavenger department of Vera Cruz.

THE CHURCH OF SAN AGUSTIN

THE Church of San Agustin is now used as a dry goods store, the dome and arched roof giving a somewhat incongruous appearance to the establishment.

It was in San Agustin, according to common belief which is entirely credible, that a large portion of the population of Vera Cruz was gathered when the town was sacked by pirates who appeared to recognize the King of France as their ruler, but who otherwise acted as though the only law was their own will or pleasure. In an old church register written by the parish priest, Agustin Villarroll, appears the following account of the looting of the city. The translation is free and is largely a summary:

“Monday, the seventeenth of May, 1683, a sail was seen and then another about two leagues distant, which were thought by the fishermen to be the fleet so long overdue. So confident were the people that they retired

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

tranquilly to their homes, believing the town perfectly safe from attack.

“At four o'clock on the morning of the eighteenth a fusillade of musketry, followed by the whistling of bullets, startled the sleeping population. Loud cries were then heard of ‘Long live the King of France!’ It proved to be an invasion of pirates, some six hundred of the savages being then on shore. The first person killed was Captain José de la Higuera, then Manuel del Rosario, a priest eighty years of age. Families only half dressed were herded together in the plaza. Finally, the church of San Agustin was broken into, and people of all ages, to the number of six thousand or more, were crowded into it, while the sacking of houses and stores went on.

“On the third day the robbers, after securing about everything of value in the town, decided to murder the people in the church. But such were the prayers to God and the cries for mercy that the cut-throats, hard-hearted as they were, hesitated, the captain, Señor Ramon, otherwise known as Agramonte, ordering a stay of proceedings.

“In order to secure more booty, the pirates in desperation began to search the altar of the

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

church, where they found six silver plates. They stripped the images of the saints of all silver vestments and ornaments of value. They then began to torture people who they thought might have valuables which they had failed to turn over, and when this failed the pirate chief got up in the pulpit and announced that he had given orders that unless the people disclosed the hiding places of their money and jewels they would all be burned to death. So terrible was this threat that the people were for the moment stricken dumb. Seeing that his words brought forth no response, the blasphemous scoundrel climbed again into the pulpit and invoked the wrath of Almighty God upon the heads of the poor people, beseeching Deity to allow no one to escape unless he divulged the hiding place of even the smallest sum of money he might have hidden away.

“At that, the people began to tell where their valuables were, and the pirates going to these places obtained, by this second effort, a little over \$600,000 (silver). Agramonte was furious because the amount was so small. The pirates left no stone unturned to obtain more money and treasure. They gathered all

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the wealthy men together, but while parleying with them, seeing horsemen in the distance, they began to get alarmed, and in great haste had all the prisoners, excepting the priests, removed from the church, whereupon the pirate chief rode his horse into the sanctuary even to the pulpit and told us to take up the march but to keep together. Under escort we started to a place to the south of the town known as Los Hornos, where we were taken in boatloads to the Island of Sacrificios about two miles off shore. The pirates then selected the best and younger of both sexes and took them aboard their vessels, and later sold them on the Spanish Main, where they found a ready market.”

Father Alegre, in his history of the Society of Jesus (Vol. III, Book IX), gives an account of the various kinds of booty secured by the pirates, the sum total of which was valued at \$4,000,000 (silver).

THE CHURCH OF THE BLACK CHRIST¹

THIS church is small and very old. It stands where, two hundred and fifty years ago,

¹For the story of the Black Christ, see Chapter V, second subject.



SAN BENITO, THE HOLY NEGRO, WITH MANY
VOTIVE RIBBONS

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

the pirates made their prisoners halt while they debated the question of putting them to death while on their way to the landing place, en route to the Sacrificios Islands.

The image of the Black Christ which is worshiped here is deep-brown in color rather than black, and hangs upon a crucifix above the altar set into a large brown frame with wooden pillars on each side embedded in the wall. Around the loins of the image is draped a scarf of blue satin embroidered in white. Upon the head rests a cheap crown, and from the right hand, which is nailed to the cross, hangs a string of pink paper roses.

At the right of the entrance to the church is a statue of "La Piedad" (Pity), which is found in so many Mexican churches. She is seated, her face deathly white, and the deep black eyes looking, almost staring, as though still witnessing the dying agonies of the Lord. A life-size image of the dead Christ lies across her knees, so low that it seems about to roll off, and with the feet toward the church entrance. The neck, mouth, and some of the fingers are made to represent the action of decomposition.

Nearly all the images and pictures have

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some history or legend. For instance, the case of Santa Rita, a nun, with a dagger mark on the forehead, contemplating a skull held in her hand. A jealous husband struck the dagger into her forehead. Later, after entering the nunnery, she contemplated death as a penance.

Another statue, seen in many churches, is that of San Benito, the Holy Negro and faithful slave. It is covered with new ribbons. It is said when a woman has a husband she does not like, she measures him with a ribbon when he does not know it, then hangs the ribbon on the saint and prays that her husband may die. Another is the statue of a man in full armor on a fiery white steed under whose hoofs are images two feet in length, dressed in blue and red in imitation of Moors. This represents Saint James fighting the devil.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHURCHES OF OAXACA

THE CHURCH OF LA SOLEDAD

THE CHURCH OF SANTO DOMINGO

CHAPTER XII

CHURCHES OF OAXACA

THE CHURCH OF LA SOLEDAD

THE legend of the founding of the Church of La Soledad (Solitude) is substantially as follows:

Thirty years after Cortez landed in Vera Cruz a muleteer was driving a caravan of mules laden with merchandise. Approaching the city of Oaxaca, he noticed that another mule, much superior to his own, carrying a covered box, had joined his caravan. He endeavored to find the owner of the lost animal, but without success, a circumstance which gave him great anxiety, lest the charge be made against him that he had stolen the animal. Arriving at Oaxaca, the strange mule dropped in front of a little church by the roadside as though unable to carry its burden any further. The man ran to inform the alcalde and other town officers, who hastened to the place where the pros-

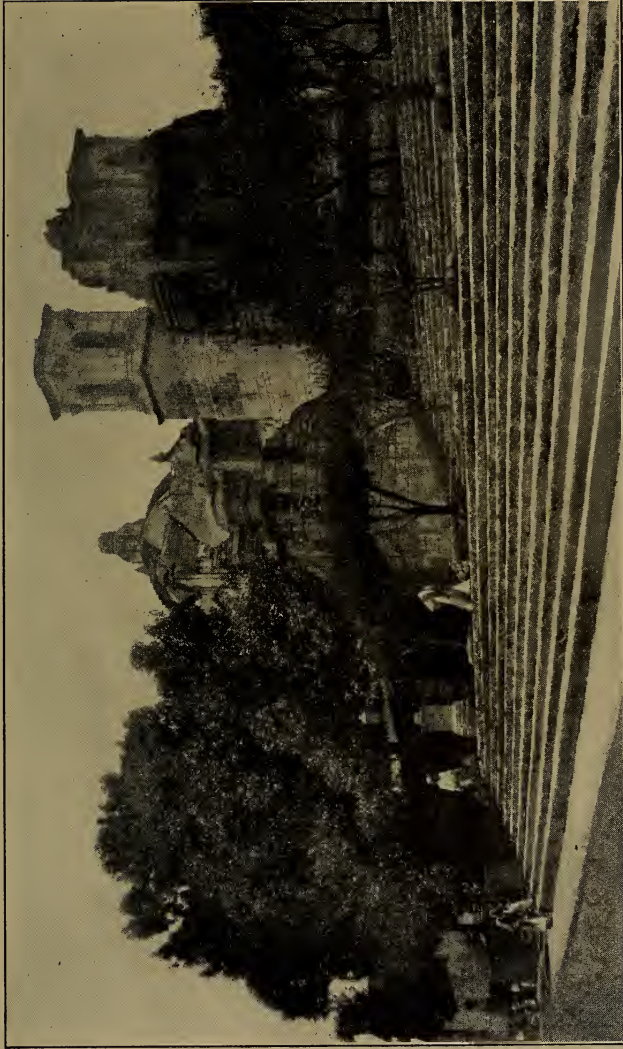
HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

trated mule was lying. The bands that held the box were loosened, and when the lid was



VIRGIN OF LA SOLEDAD, WITH ROBE EMBROIDERED WITH PEARLS, AND WEARING THE CROWN COSTING 150,000 PESOS

removed the image of a Virgin was found, together with a note indicating her name—"Our Lady of Solitude at The Foot of the Cross." The burden having been removed



Waite Photo.

CHURCH OF LA SOLEDAD, OAXACA

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

from the mule's back, the animal rose and tried to stand, but he trembled violently and fell dead. The canon in charge of the little church sent for the Bishop of Oaxaca. Being impressed with the wonderful miracle, he tenderly carried the image into the church and guarded it. The story spread rapidly among the superstitious masses. People came from all parts of the country to pay homage to the Virgin. They presented her with pearls, rubies, diamonds, and other precious stones, pearls from the Pacific Coast predominating.

The rock where the mule fell, and over which a church was built, has been worn smooth by the kisses of the faithful during these four centuries. The present church was built at a cost of nearly \$500,000 (silver) and paid for by a wealthy merchant, Señor Pedro Caraval, then living in Oaxaca. In 1697 five nuns of the San Agustin Order took charge of the robes and jewelry of the Virgin. A convent was built next to the church and many more nuns were employed constantly in the making of the finest clothing. The image possesses a magnificent wardrobe of the daintiest hand-embroidered lingerie. The

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

pearl-embroidered robe is famous throughout the republic. It is made of the finest imported black silk velvet, and a few years ago 397,920 individual pearls were counted embroidered on the robe.

On January 18, 1908, one of the greatest religious gatherings ever held in Mexico took place in this church, when a crown, costing \$150,000 (silver), was placed upon the head of the image by the Apostolic Delegate from Rome.

In October, 1866, General Porfirio Diaz, afterward for so many years President of Mexico, while opposing the Imperialists under General Oronoz, forced his way into Oaxaca and finally entered the sanctuary of La Soledad, where as a poor boy he had often been impressed by the beauty and costliness of the Virgin's apparel. He seized the velvet dress, so heavily embroidered with pearls, the gold stomacher, encrusted with emeralds, pearls, and diamonds; the necklaces of sparkling gems; the solid crown of emeralds and diamonds, and the chalice and crosses set with rubies and other precious stones. This wardrobe, valued at \$2,000,000 (silver), was carefully guarded by General Diaz until the



Waite Photo.

SANTO DOMINGO, OAXACA

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

church redeemed it by the payment of \$20,000. Since then the church authorities have kept the hiding place of these jewels a profound secret.

THE CHURCH OF SANTO DOMINGO

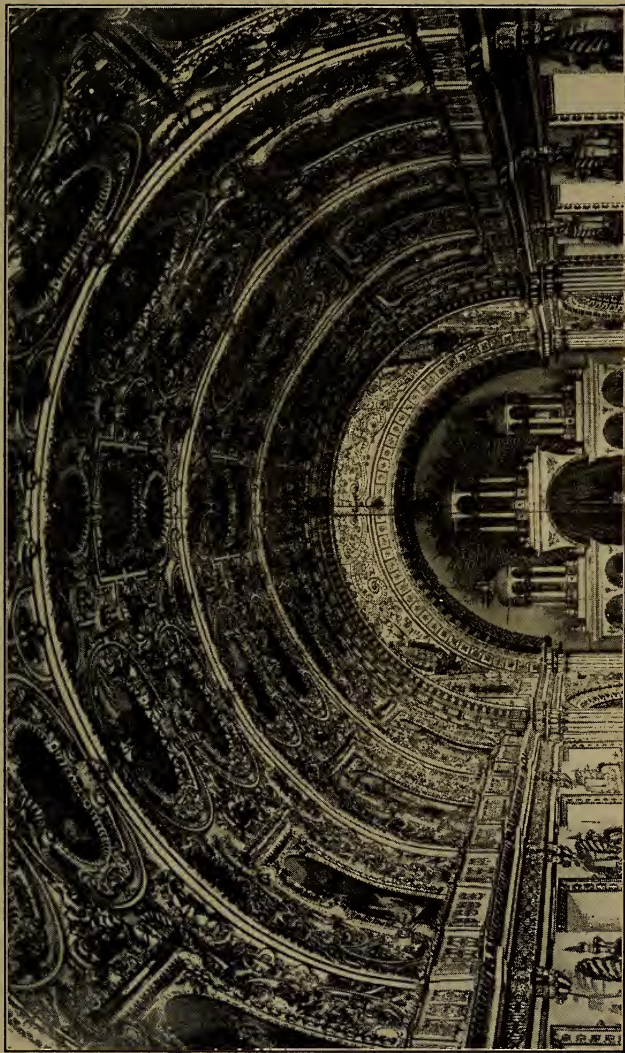
WHEN Cortez had settled affairs to his satisfaction in the valley of Mexico he sent a force southward to subdue the inhabitants of Oaxaca and thereby open a route to the port of Coatzacoalcos on the gulf, thus securing the immense deposits of gold and silver in that locality. After the conquest of that part of Mexico Charles V of Spain proclaimed Oaxaca a city. Government buildings were erected, the foundations of five churches were laid, and those foundation stones remain where they were placed four hundred years ago. The original Cathedral which took the place of a primitive church was completed in 1730, one hundred and seventy-seven years after the foundation was laid. Through the ravages of war the Cathedral was despoiled of its decorations, and nothing is left of it of special interest to the visitor.

In the year 1575 it was determined to build

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

a church and monastery for the use of the Dominican friars, and a site was selected near the Cathedral. It was expected that the proposed edifice would be built with money contributed by the people, but the result of the first effort was not reassuring, as only two and a half dollars were found on the collection plates. The friars, however, were not to be discouraged, and they started out on a campaign which brought generous gifts, not only from wealthy Mexicans but a large contribution from the King of Spain. The church and convent were built. They are of immense proportions and cost a fabulous amount. Some idea of their dimensions may be obtained from the statement that four buildings the size of Westminster Abbey could be accommodated on the ground covered by the church and its convent. Owing to the thickness of the walls the church has withstood many earthquake shocks, though the statues have sometimes toppled over.

It was in connection with this church that the Dominicans opened the first drug store and dispensary in this new land. Its library was ranked among the greatest in the country. Whenever the Governor of the state attended



Waite Photo.

INTERIOR OF SANTO DOMINGO CHURCH, OAXACA

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

mass he was assigned a high seat in the chancel near the altar. Indeed, there are persons still living in Oaxaca who frequently saw Benito Juarez, afterward President of the republic, occupying this chair during his term as Governor of the state.

In 1865 the French army under Marshall Bazaine captured Oaxaca, and the Santo Domingo Church and convent were converted into barracks. The gold decorations were removed and the high altar of elaborately carved and gilded wood, enriched with oil paintings, was partially destroyed. The walls to this day carry the marks of cannon balls. Following the fall of the Intervention the Dominicans were expelled from the country; still the convent proper is used as barracks by the federal garrison.

A few years ago the Bishop of the diocese of Oaxaca obtained permission from President Diaz to restore the church. It should be added that since the adoption of the Constitution of 1857 all churches in Mexico are the property of the government, but such as are necessary for worship are leased to the church authorities for a term of ninety-nine years, without further cost than repairs. It

HISTORIC CHURCHES IN MEXICO

is against the Laws of Reform for the church to hold property except for actual worship.

The Santo Domingo Church, since its restoration, is considered the handsomest and richest in the republic. A genealogical tree of the House of David is traced on the vaulted ceiling. From the tree, running along the center, project branches among the golden leaves of which may be seen figures representing the lineal line of David. The same design is carried out on the ceiling near the main entrance. A figure of the Most Holy Virgin occupies the central position. From the branches depend bunches of clustering grapes. Between the leaves of gold appear busts of thirty-four figures which diminish in size till, at the apex, only faces are discernible. The frescoing throughout is superb.



Waite Photo.

THE "TREE OF DAVID" ON CEILING OF SANTO DOMINGO, OAXACA

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